

# DN disabilitynow

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## Winter death toll proof

DN CAMPAIGN



EXCLUSIVE BY JOHN PRING

DN can reveal the strongest evidence yet that disabled people are dying every winter because they cannot afford to heat their homes.

New figures – compiled from answers to a parliamentary question asked by Labour MP Roger Berry – provide an estimate of the number of people who have stopped receiving Incapacity Benefit (IB) during the winter months because they have died.

The figures, released by disabled people's minister Anne McGuire, provide the first solid evidence that winter cold kills disabled people under 60.

They show that an average of more than 4,700 people have stopped receiving IB after dying during the winter months over the last five years, compared

with less than 4,300 a quarter during warmer months.

This figure of about 400 "excess winter deaths" provides DN with the first evidence yet from the government that cold weather kills disabled people.

The statistics are supported by a new report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation\*, which says three in every ten disabled adults of working age in Britain are living in poverty – double the rate among non-disabled adults.

Poverty among children and older people is falling, thanks to government policies, according to Guy Palmer, co-author of the report. But poverty among disabled people is "high and rising, with little by way of government policy, thus far, to help". He said tackling disabled poverty needed to be a "priority".

Kenneth Maclean, a wheelchair user from West London who struggles to pay his fuel bills, said he was "disgusted"



LEO WILKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Kenneth Maclean: "This winter is going to be even colder"

by the government's attitude.

"You worry about every winter and this one is going to be even colder. Does that

mean a lot more will die?

"The government has been warned but they are not doing anything about it."

Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance, said the government should finally accept the arguments for extending winter fuel payments, particularly as the Met Office has predicted a severely cold winter.

She said: "The figures show strong evidence that chronically sick and disabled people are particularly at risk during the winter months." And she called for the government to examine whether Disability Living Allowance statistics produced similar, or even stronger, evidence of winter deaths.

The Department for Work and Pensions said again that it stood by its decision not to extend winter fuel payments. The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, failed to extend the payments in his pre-budget report.

\* *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2005*, £18.95, tel: 01904 430 033, or download free summary at: [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

## Cannabis rules in turmoil

DN CAMPAIGN



The UK government's policy on cannabis-based drugs appeared to be in complete disarray as DN went to press.

The Home Office (HO) told us it would not allow people with conditions other than multiple sclerosis (MS) to even apply for permission to import the cannabis-based medicine Sativex. The decision appears to run contrary to current HO drugs policy and it contrasts with a Department of Health statement in November which stated: "A clinician wanting to import for a condition other than MS is effectively asking for a new import license and effectively both HO and the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) would consider its merits separately."

The MHRA, the govern-

ment's medicines advice body, also told DN that people with conditions other than MS could ask their GPs or consultants to approach the HO for a licence to import the drug.

An MHRA spokesman said: "We would look into applications from patients with other conditions."

But a HO spokesman contradicted this, saying: "We are not considering the import of Sativex on a named patient basis in conditions other than MS."

He said the HO would only examine requests from doctors wishing to conduct clinical trials to assess the medicine's use for conditions other than MS. The spokesman was unable to explain or justify the decision.

GW Pharmaceuticals (GWP)\*, the company that produces Sativex, encouraged all patients who could benefit from the drug to ask their doc-

tors to approach GWP for more information.

The HO-inspired farce came as two people with MS were preparing to receive their first supplies of Sativex.

But others with MS are facing problems getting the drug.

Melvyn Scott, from Winchester, asked his GP to begin the application process, but after the doctor approached his primary care trust, he was advised not to go further.

Christine Jones, chief executive of the MS Trust, said doctors should only approach primary care trusts if they want advice. She added: "There seems to be an awful lot of misinformation about this. The Department of Health should take this up. One of the difficulties is that two different government departments are involved."

\*GWP, tel: 01980 557 000, [www.gwpfarm.co.uk](http://www.gwpfarm.co.uk)



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On the cover: Nominations open in DN's search for the UK's most influential disabled people, page 19



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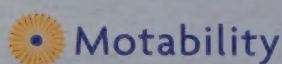
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[www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)



# More in care

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

The number of disabled people living in residential and nursing homes is on the increase, as local authorities fail to follow the principles of independent living, campaigners say.

The latest Department of Health\* figures show the number of disabled people under 65 in care homes increased by more than 7,000 to 51,375 between 1997 and 2002.

The figures include all those who received financial support from a local authority, but do not include disabled people aged 65 and over.

Neil Coyle, a policy manager

at the Disability Rights Commission, said: "Where disabled people's rights have advanced in terms of access to education, employment, services and leisure opportunities, they have not been matched with rights to independent living that empower people to participate in those areas."

The figures showed that the increase was due to more people with learning difficulties and mental health conditions in residential care, with an increase of nearly 5,000 and more than 3,000 respectively between 1997 and 2002.

The number of people with sensory and physical impair-

ments dropped slightly over the same period.

Mr Coyle said the attitude of local authorities towards independent living was to blame. "People with learning difficulties are characterised by local authorities as having complex needs, and it is considered as a simpler option to put them in residential care."

Tara Flood, Scope's head of external affairs, said: "These figures make for depressing reading when you consider all messages from the government currently are about supporting disabled people out of institutions and into independent lives."

\*[www.performance.doh.gov.uk](http://www.performance.doh.gov.uk)

# Cash crises continue

A further round of cuts and closures have renewed fears about a financial crisis facing disabled people and their organisations (DN, November 2005).

Disabled people in Surrey protested outside Kingston county hall last month over the council's policies on charging for services. Clive Wood, director of North West Surrey Association of Disabled People, said the charges were leaving many disabled people without enough money to live on.

He added: "We're not talking about luxuries, we're talking about basic care. More and more people are coming to us.

They are having real difficulties paying for services."

A spokeswoman for Surrey County Council said: "Our government grant is allocated on the assumption that we will charge, and we are underfunded by the government as it is."

Meanwhile Is There An Accessible Loo? (ITAAL), a charity led by disabled people, which compiled a directory of accessible toilets, was forced to close its doors at the end of last month (DN, September 2005).

ITAAL founder Diana Twitchin said: "We wanted to help disabled people, especially women, get out and about.

We've been slogging our hearts out but nobody seems to appreciate we need extra funding."

Finally, a family in Sittingbourne got a last minute reprieve after being told in November that courses for people with learning difficulties at Kent Adult Education Service would be axed due to government funding cuts.

Bryan Wood was notified last month that his daughter Rosie's four courses would be reinstated, but said he was worried that they would face the same situation next term.

He said: "We no longer trust them. Rosie certainly doesn't."

# Worldwide rights threat

Loopholes in the UN draft convention on disability could threaten the rights of disabled people across the world, campaigners have warned.

Speakers at a parliamentary meeting supported by Save the Children (SC), Scope, and the British Council of Disabled People, called on the UK government to address articles of the convention that do not fully protect disabled people.

Gerison Lansdown, an SC consultant, called for "specific items around child protection from violence".

Tony Manwaring, chief executive of Scope, said the draft also puts disabled adults who cannot give informed consent for medical treatment at risk.

Richard Light, who is consulting with the UN on the draft convention, warned it was unlikely to be approved by the target date of Autumn 2007.

\* [www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

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# Day wows awards



Comedian Steve Day (above) warms up the crowd at the 39th People of the Year Awards, organised by RADAR.

Among the winners was Dr Richard Light, an independent consultant, who scooped the international human rights award for his work on the UN Disability Convention.

Claire McCambley, chair of the board of Whizz-Kidz, scooped the young person's award for increasing public understanding of disabled children's rights.

The judges' award for achievement by a RADAR member was given to Ian

Loynes, for introducing innovative services as co-ordinator of the Southampton Centre for Independent Living.

TV show *Coronation Street* won the media award for its story line involving Freda, a deaf character played by deaf actress Ali Briggs.

Other winners included Dr Philippa Russell, a Disability Rights Commissioner, who won the lifetime achievement award; Brian Lamb, the RNID's director of communications, who received the UK human rights award; and Intercontinental Hotels, which won the customer service access award.

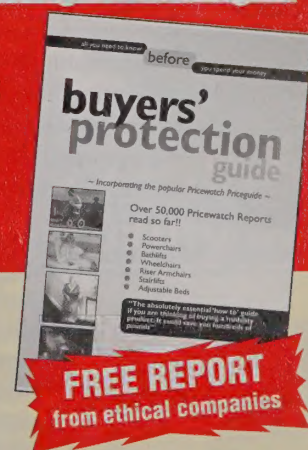
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Royal approval: Adam Thomas gives Princess Anne a tour of the state-of-the-art accessible kitchen he designed, at the official opening of the new headquarters of the Spinal Injuries Association in Milton Keynes last month.

GEORGE OLNEY

# CIL warning

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Leading campaigners have raised concerns that Centres for Independent Living (CIL) are in danger of collapse.

At a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Disability Group in November, Jane Campbell, chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence, urged the committee to highlight in parliament the fact that CILs were losing direct payments contracts to large, non-user led providers.

She said this contradicted government commitments to service delivery by organisations led by disabled people.

Ian Loynes, director of Southampton CIL, who helped organise a lobby of the

Association of Directors of Social Services (ADSS), said he had received no response from the ADSS president.

He said CILs "face extinction" and the government target of a CIL in each authority by 2010 was unlikely to be met.

"The way things are going, we'll be lucky to have any CILs in the country by 2010."

Sian Vasey (right), director of Ealing CIL, said: "There is no evidence at all to show that the (non-CIL) organisations getting the commissions are doing good work."

Nick Danagher, executive director for the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), said he was hopeful that some of the issues would be



addressed through new public duties being introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act later this year, and through government commitments.

Mr Danagher said: "As much as it may seem the situation is going backward for local CILs, it is not as though the issue is being ignored by the government. The door of opportunity is perhaps more open than it has been."

## DDA rights extended further

More than 250,000 people with long-term health conditions can no longer be discriminated against on the basis of their impairment, after parts of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 took effect last month.

Under the legislation, patients with HIV, multiple sclerosis and cancer are now legally protected from the moment they are diagnosed – even if they are not showing any signs of their condition.

It means employers will not be able to sack a worker on the basis of their impairment.

People with mental health conditions also receive further protection under the new law, as they do not now have to prove their condition has a substantial and long-term impact on their lives in order to bring a case.

Welcoming the new rights, Bert Massie, chairman of the Disability Rights Commission, said: "The law will help people

stay in work where they can and to get the full range of public and private services that every person should be able to take for granted."

It has also become unlawful for private clubs with 25 or more members to treat disabled members less favourably.

A spokesman for The Royal British Legion, which has 20 clubs in the UK, said venues should have improved access since an audit six years ago.

## Thousands of carers leave benefits unclaimed

Carers are missing out on an estimated £750 million a year in unclaimed benefits, according to a new report\*.

The charity Carers UK said older carers were hardest hit, with a quarter of a million carers over the age of 60 not claiming Pension Credit.

The report also found that one in ten older carers were having to cut back on food and nearly seven in ten were having to cut back on other essentials,

such as clothes and heating.

The figures were revealed as the charity marked Carers Rights Day last month.

Imelda Redmond, chief executive of Carers UK, said: "It is vital that carers claim their entitlements. We know that if they don't, they struggle on a low income and this affects their health and well-being."

\*Caring and pensioner poverty: A report on older carers, employment and benefits, [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)



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# 'Icon Blunkett brought down'

BY JOHN PRING

A disabled Labour MP has blamed a "media witch-hunt" for David Blunkett's decision to resign as secretary of state for work and pensions.

Anne Begg said Mr Blunkett "understood what it is like to be a disabled person who is discriminated against" and those who "brought him down" had done a "huge disservice to disabled people".

She said she saw Mr Blunkett as an "icon", and his resignation upset her more than that of any other minister.

She said the press had been "out to get him".

"They wouldn't have rested until they got a scalp. He has behaved remarkably calmly in the face of the media onslaught and witch-hunt."

She said the same media organisations that caused his resignation were now running "scare stories" about the government's proposals on reform of Incapacity Benefits (IB).

The resignation caused disabled people further stress and worry because it delayed the publication of the government's green paper, she added.

Ms Begg, a member of the Commons work and pensions committee, said she had heard nothing from ministers or civil servants to suggest the government was planning to place a time limit on how long disabled people could receive IB.

She said: "The whole thrust of everything the government has done in recent years is about opportunity and choice and allowing disabled people the choice to do what they can do and not be written off as they previously have done."

The green paper on IB reform will be published this month.



Sound learning: Children from Christ the King School in Birmingham helped celebrate the second anniversary of the Talking Book project, which helps disabled children use music technology. The project, led by workshop tutor Duncan Grimley, is one of many that have been developed over the last two years at the city's Symphony Hall.

## New 'champion' for disabled people

Disability groups and government officials have welcomed the launch of a new Office for Disability Issues (ODI).

Ministers hope the ODI will help government departments work together to carry out the recommendations in the Prime Minister's strategy report, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*.\*

A steering group of ministers representing departments including work and pensions, health, education and transport, will meet quarterly and publish an annual report on progress.

The ODI will also create a national forum where the views

of disabled people and disability groups will influence policy.

Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people, told the launch: "The *Life Chances* report identified the need for a champion for disabled people within government – and we have acted quickly on their recommendation. The new ODI will drive forward our overall strategy."

Anne Pridmore, chair of the British Council of Disabled People, said there was "a real need" for the ODI to ensure government policy promoted disabled people's rights.

\*[www.strategy.gov.uk/work\\_areas/disability/index.asp](http://www.strategy.gov.uk/work_areas/disability/index.asp)

## Learning difficulties tsar will be a government first

The government is to make its first appointment of a person with learning difficulties as one of its national "tsars".

The successful candidate will work alongside Rob Greig, national director for learning disabilities, and join the government's other "tsars", for older people, mental health and children.

The joint tsar will be paid a salary, but will only work one day a week. As part of their role, they will co-chair the Learning Disabilities Taskforce with Mr Greig.

Mr Greig said: "I hope other organisations follow our lead and employ people with learning disabilities at the highest possible level."

Although the announcement

was welcomed, one leading self-advocacy campaigner had some reservations.

Karen Spencer, of Central England People First, said: "It is good that they are going to appoint someone with learning difficulties." But she warned the new tsar could become isolated from the self-advocacy movement. And she said some talented people could be put off applying over fears of losing benefits by taking a one-day-a-week post.

Meanwhile, the government's third annual report on learning disabilities\* called for more money and support for advocacy.

\**Valuing People: Making things better*, £15, tel: 0870 600 5522 or visit [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## Scrutiny call for individual budget plans

Disabled people's organisations want to be consulted by the government at every stage of the new pilot projects on individual budgets.

The Department of Health (DH) announced in November that 13 local authorities would share £2.6m to set up systems to help some disabled people take control of their own social care budgets.

Disabled people in the pilot

areas will be assigned care managers to introduce them to the services on offer, such as housing adaptations, social care, and Access to Work payments, and help them decide which services they need and how to get them.

Each local authority will get £200,000 to test out different models for delivering individual budgets to various groups

Menghi Mulchandani, of Action Disability in Kensington

and Chelsea, one of the pilot sites, said disabled people's organisations should play an "essential role" in designing and developing the pilot projects and evaluating their outcomes.

A DH spokeswoman said: "We will be ensuring that local disability groups and disabled people are involved in the design of the local pilot projects."

• For a full list of pilot sites visit [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)



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Fly free: Ealing North MP Steve Pound sets free a basket of doves to launch a publication by Disability Connect, a network of Ealing disability groups, on last month's International Day of Disabled People. The *Squeaky Wheel* booklet\* paints "a bleak picture of the day-to-day reality of being disabled when services are in short supply".

\*For a free copy, tel: 020 8840 8573 or email: [ecil@btconnect.com](mailto:ecil@btconnect.com)

# Just one taxi in town

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

A disabled woman has criticised her council for refusing to ensure there is more than a single accessible taxi in her home town.

Wheelchair user Julie Whatley contacted South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) after finding there was only one taxi in Grantham, Lincolnshire, that could accommodate her needs – and that needs to be booked up to a week in advance.

Although she can use a Dial-a-Ride service during the day, it does not operate at night, so the shortage of accessible taxis makes it difficult to have an active social life.

Miss Whatley said the council told her the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) does not require more licensed accessible taxis until as late as 2020.

She said: "I've got a 21st birthday coming up and securing the taxi is hit and miss. I must book up to a week in advance."

"I asked the council why they don't give these taxi blokes an incentive [to drive accessible taxis] by waiving the licence fee, but they said: 'No way'."

Tim Hand, of the mobility and inclusion unit at the Department for Transport, said: "In advance of national regulations, accessibility regulations are left for local licensing authorities. All we can do at this stage is advise and encourage."

But a SKDC spokeswoman said the council was waiting for government guidelines about what would be expected when parts of the DDA relating to taxis become law between 2010 and 2020.

## In brief

### Thalidomide payout

Diageo plc, the successor to Distillers, which originally marketed the drug Thalidomide, has agreed to a £6.5 million settlement with Thalidomide organisations, up from the previous £2.8 million. The payment predicted in *DN* (Nov 05) will be made annually until 2037. Lord Blythe, chairman of Diageo plc, apologised for the "suffering and hurt" of those affected.

### Flour power

An independent government advice body recommended that folic acid be added to all flour in the UK, in a bid to reduce the number of unborn babies with conditions such as spina bifida.

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition published a draft report\* and expects to submit a final report to the government in the spring. \*[www.sacn.gov.uk](http://www.sacn.gov.uk)

### Cell research boost

The government said it would double its investment in stem cell research from £50 million over two years to £100 million.

It also welcomed recommendations on public investment and regulation in a report by the UK Stem Cell Initiative\*.

\*[www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk](http://www.advisorybodies.doh.gov.uk)

### Parents' OK to sue

The parents of about 30 children born in the 1980s and 1990s with birth defects were given permission by the High Court to sue a council they claim caused the conditions by mismanaging the clear-up of toxic waste dumps.

The mothers of the children claim Corby Borough Council exposed them to contaminated waste from Northamptonshire's former steel industry when they were pregnant.

### Spinal cord hopes

A neuroscientist said he hoped to treat spinal cord injuries in at least ten patients later this year, by cultivating stem cells taken from their noses and using them to reconnect damaged nerve fibres.

Professor Geoffrey Raisman, of the Spinal Repair Unit at University College London, has restored some use to nerve-damaged limbs in rats and hopes to successfully repeat the technique in patients who have a single paralysed arm.

## New powers for tenants welcomed

Disabled private sector tenants in Scotland will soon have powers to make or demand adaptations to their housing, thanks to a new Scottish Housing Act.

The new rights, expected to come into force in 2007, were passed by the Scottish

Parliament in November.

The act gives tenants the right to either carry out adaptations at their own cost or request their landlords to do so.

Landlords cannot unreasonably refuse to carry out adaptations, but may impose certain conditions, for exam-

ple, that the tenant should restore the house to its original condition at the end of the tenancy.

For disabled tenants who cannot afford adaptations, the act also introduces a more flexible approach to an existing system of grants.

Richard Hamer, director of Ownership Options, a Scottish housing and disability charity, said: "I'm very pleased that a private tenant can no longer be unreasonably refused the right to adapt their house to suit a disabled family member or flatmate."

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# Scooter scheme scrapped after canal 'near misses'

BY JOHN PRING

Bosses at a Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) garden have scrapped a scheme that allowed disabled visitors to borrow electric scooters – after a string of accidents and near-misses.

More than one visitor narrowly avoided driving over the top of a rock garden and into a canal because of “poor scooter control” at one accident blackspot.

Managers at the RHS garden in Wisley, Surrey, responded by replacing the three scooters with a single “mobility vehicle”, driven by a member of staff, that drops visitors off at certain key points of the garden.

But disabled campaigners



Safer option: The staff-driven mobility vehicle is unpopular with visitors

are angry with the changes. In a letter to the garden's management, South West Surrey Empowering Disability said the

removal of the scooters “limits the independence of individuals to enjoy the gardens at a time of their personal choosing,

especially those of limited mobility”.

Sue Thompson, marketing and public relations manager for the garden, said: “We have had some near-misses. When you are getting people using vehicles they are not familiar with, it is not necessarily the safest environment for them.”

She said more people used the mobility buggy than had borrowed the scooters, and they hoped to buy a second vehicle.

Disabled visitors are still allowed to use their own powered wheelchairs and scooters.

She said the overwhelming reaction had been “very positive”, but they were “continuing to review the situation”.

## Award gives new life to sculptor's work

Artist Adam Reynolds, who died in August, has received a posthumous lifetime achievement award at a disability arts festival.

The £500 prize money from last month's DaDaFest DaDaAwards will be used to help save one of his sculptures, Of Common Origin.

The sculpture (*below*), created in 1992/93, was originally commissioned by Scope for its Midlands offices in Redditch to mark the charity's 40th anniversary, but when the charity moved it was put into storage. It is now likely to be exhibited in Dorset.



Ruth Gould, creative director of the North West Disability Arts Forum\*, which co-ordinated the awards, said they were pleased to honour Reynolds's work and “thrilled” that Isabelle (his widow) would be able to save the sculpture.

Other award winners included Laurence Clark (Performance Artist), Craig McDonald (Emerging Performance Artist) and Rachel Gadsen (Visual Artist).

\* [www.nwdaf.co.uk](http://www.nwdaf.co.uk)

# Gulf War veterans in pensions blow

More than 1,500 war veterans with Gulf War syndrome (GWS) who hope to claim a disability war pension have had their hopes of a quick settlement dashed by the government.

Veterans had hoped that a ruling in favour of Daniel Martin, who had to prove the existence of GWS in order to

receive a war pension (*DN*, December 2005), would make it easier for them to claim a war pension on the same grounds.

But the Ministry of Defence (MOD) said it did not recognise the existence of GWS as a “discrete pathological entity”, despite the tribunal ruling that GWS was an “appropriate medical label” to use.

An MOD spokeswoman said: “We have not changed any of our policies/procedures following the Daniel Martin Pensions Appeal Tribunal. However, we do accept the use of Gulf War syndrome as an umbrella term.”

Shaun Rusling, vice-chairman for the National Gulf Veterans and Families

Association, said the MOD's stance was “very disappointing and morally and ethically wrong”.

He said: “If it's necessary we'll take each and every case to tribunal and there will come a point when the law will ask questions about why the MOD are refusing to address the matter.”

## Parents must be involved in children's care

The government should take legislation “a step further” in order to improve services for disabled children and their families, according to a disability charity.

Tracie Linehan, head of Scope Early Years, told November's Seamless Services For Children with Disabilities conference – supported by *DN* – that each council should have at least one fully inclusive children's centre, to help parents of disabled children who want to get back to work.

Families must also be involved in their disabled child's care “right from the start” and have access to co-ordinated services, to avoid repeating the same information many times.

She said: “[Parents] are not interested in your risk assessment, in your costs, in your internal problems. They want to know they can access the services that they need.”

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Count-y councillor: Users of Islington Council's Highbury Resource Centre for people with learning difficulties gave a guided tour to Islington councillor Meral Ece (left), to mark the completion of the first stage of the centre's £750,000 refurbishment. Cllr Ece is pictured in the games room with Jean Curtis and Paul Whaller.

## Government website failings

Only three per cent of online government services across the European Union are fully accessible, according to a new report by the Cabinet Office.

The report showed that only 13 of 436 public service websites achieved full accessibility status in line with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, a set of internet best-practice standards issued by the World Wide Web consortium.

The Department of Health's website was one of only three online services to be commended for consistently good practice, although it still required

improvements to achieve the highest grade in the top category. Not one service achieved this very highest standard.

Meanwhile, the Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) called for more electronic documents to be made accessible to blind and partially sighted people, in a new campaign, Good E-document Design.

*\*eAccessibility of public sector services in the European Union, from the Cabinet Office eGU Technology Policy team, 3rd Floor, Stockley House, 130 Wilton Road, London SW1V 1LQ*

# Law flaws

BY JOHN PRING

A new government plan to boost diversity in the legal profession makes almost no reference to disabled people.

The report, published in late November, calls for legal firms and barristers' chambers to monitor how many women and people from ethnic minorities they employ. It also says the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) should monitor how many female and ethnic minority lawyers become QCs (senior barristers).

Bridget Prentice, the legal services minister, said it was "essential that the legal profes-

sion should be, and should be seen to be, representative of all the people it serves".

But the only reference to disability in the report's recommendations is that "consideration" should be given to collecting data relating to "other factors that may hamper progression, including disability".

A DCA spokesman said a reference to "disability" was implied whenever the report quoted the word "diversity". But he could not explain why the recommendations said factors such as disability should merely be considered, whereas race and gender were explicitly stated. He hung up when a DN reporter

questioned the inconsistency.

Last month, DN reported how the DCA had made an explicit call for measures to increase the number of disabled judges, plans praised by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC).

A DRC spokesman said the DCA report "should have amplified the real requirements for the legal profession to strongly encourage more disabled people to join the profession".

He also said the DRC was working with the DCA on its plans for more disabled judges and would "pinpoint any obstacles that could get in the way", including the new report.

## Transport boss admits bus drivers' attitudes must change

Disabled Londoners have called for more working bus ramps, during a rare opportunity to question a senior transport official.

It came as Transport for All, a charity which promotes the rights of disabled travellers in London, held its annual general meeting in November.

Chunilal Jobanputra, a disabled transport user from South

Croydon, told Peter Hendy, Transport for London's (TfL) director of surface transport, how he was "frequently" unable to use buses due to broken ramps. On other occasions, the ramps couldn't be used because of rubbish on the streets.

Mr Hendy admitted more work was needed to make bus stops more accessible. But he said latest figures showed just 1.6 per cent of buses failed to have working ramps, compared to one in three in June 2001.

"At least some of the complaints about ramps not working are about the drivers' unwillingness to use them," he added.

He said TfL was addressing this problem through its BTEC in driver training, which includes how to operate a wheelchair ramp.

Other complaints included poor enforcement of priority seats for disabled people on buses, and a call for a greater police presence on tubes and trains.

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# New Deal contract changes under fire

BY JOHN PRING

A disabled Labour MP has raised fears that small local charities could lose their contracts to help disabled people into work, thanks to the government's planned "rationalisation" of its New Deal programmes.

Anne Begg told the Commons work and pensions select committee that voluntary organisations were some of the "key providers" of the New Deal, including the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP).

John Hutton, the secretary of state for work and pensions, who was also giving evidence to the committee, said he wanted "better value for money" from the New Deal.

He said: "This is not about walking away from people. We certainly do need to get better value for money in our overall



New Deal questions: Anne Begg (left) and John Hutton

expenditure in this area so there will be change. I want to see a broad range of providers, some in the private sector, some in the voluntary sector, some local authorities and some in the public sector."

The government aims to introduce new contracts for all its New Deal providers in April.

But Ms Begg told the minister she feared the "rationalisation" would lead to bigger

providers with bigger contracts, at the expense of small, local voluntary organisations.

She said: "These are very good organisations doing very good work and are not in it for the profit."

After the meeting, Ms Begg told *DN* that voluntary organisations were often successful NDDP providers because they had built up expertise through working with disabled people.

## Slow take-up of accessible housing plans

Only four of 31 boroughs have implemented policies on wheelchair-accessible housing contained in the London Plan, according to new research.

The Greater London Authority said in its February 2004 plan that ten per cent of all new housing should be fully wheelchair accessible.

But research by John Grooms Housing Association (JGHA) has revealed that only four London boroughs make a clear reference to the ten per cent figure in their own planning and housing frameworks.

Five councils included a vague commitment to the quota and eight did not mention wheelchair standard housing at all.

Tim Fallon, chief executive of JGHA, said the shortage of wheelchair accessible housing meant "thousands of disabled people throughout London are living in unsuitable homes".

JGHA called for stronger planning agreements between councils and developers.

A spokesman for the Mayor of London said it can take time for boroughs to change their targets formally.

The Mayor is also developing a London accessible housing register.



Sign of success: Deputy prime minister John Prescott (right) met staff from SignPost, ITV Tyne Tees's award-winning BSL translation unit, during a visit to open the company's new studios in Gateshead. Pictured are SignPost's Eileen Young (left), Lynn Jordan and Joseph Sheridan.

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## Autism ignorance

The first UK survey of autism awareness has revealed widespread misconceptions about the condition.

So far, more than 28,000 people have taken part in the survey\* for the National Autistic Society.

Four in five respondents who did not know anyone with autism thought that people

with the condition had exceptional "savant" talents – like Dustin Hoffman's character in *Rain Man*. In reality, only about one in 100 have such abilities.

The survey also found that 98 per cent believed teachers in mainstream schools should receive autism training.

\*To take part, see [www.autismcounts.org.uk](http://www.autismcounts.org.uk)

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# Benefit system too complex, says report

BY JOHN PRING

Disabled people often face serious problems coping with the complexity of the benefits system, according to a new National Audit Office (NAO) report.

The report\* said the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had made the system easier for staff and customers, but that more still needed to be done.

Disabled people often under-claim for benefits they are entitled to because they find it so difficult to fill in forms and deal with the system, said the report.

They can also face poor quality explanations when

DWP staff write to justify their decisions.

The report said there were frequent errors in benefit payments due to mistakes by both staff and customers.

Figures from 2003/04 showed nearly half of all Disability Living Allowance appeals and more than one in four Incapacity Benefit appeals were successful.

The report called for new, simpler benefits, easier application procedures and better use of technology.

Sir John Bourn, head of the NAO, said the balance "has not yet been reached" between a system detailed enough to respond to needs and straightforward enough to be

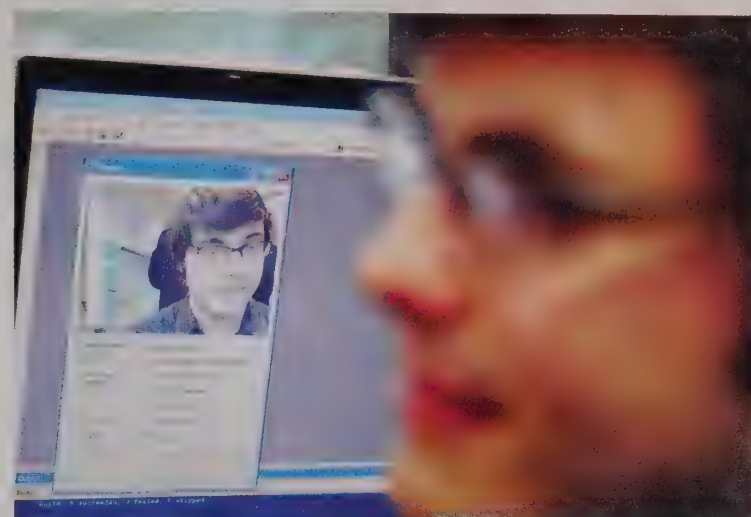
run efficiently, communicate clearly with customers and minimise errors.

Work and pensions minister James Plaskitt said: "This complexity has built up over many decades. But we have acknowledged that we need to take action to make the system simpler for our customers and welcome the NAO report."

He said the imminent green paper on benefits reform would include proposals for further improvements.

\* *Dealing with the complexity of the benefits system, copies at £12.25 available from the Stationery Office, tel: 0845 7023 474, or free from [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)*

# Computer freedom of new webcam software



Looking good: A user tests the revolutionary new free software

A new computer programme will provide a cheap way for people with limited speech and mobility to operate a computer – just by raising an eyebrow.

Existing systems can cost tens of thousands of pounds, but the Visual Inference Machine (VIM)\*, developed by academics at Cambridge University's department of engineering, will be free to download and use. The user will only need a computer and webcam.

The software replaces the need for a mouse, allowing disabled users to navigate their computer and even answer their mobile phone.

A webcam records unique

facial movements and triggers the correct function on the computer. Coupled with another piece of the university's software called Dasher, users can also write emails at speeds close to keyboard input.

The technology has taken two years to develop and is in the final stages of testing before being made available to anyone to download for free.

Nicole Penn-Symons, chief executive of the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF), welcomed the new software, saying: "Software such as this is fantastic because it really empowers disabled people."

\*Tel: 01954 202 789 or see: [www.eng.cam.ac.uk](http://www.eng.cam.ac.uk)

# Olympic pledges under review

Disabled athletes and sports bodies have said the launch of a new inquiry into sporting opportunities for disabled Londoners is a "positive step".

The inquiry, which will be conducted by a London Assembly committee in the spring, comes as the capital prepares to host the Paralympic and Olympic games in 2012.

It will look at ways to increase the participation of disabled people in sport

through better support and access to sporting venues. It will also review promises made in the London 2012 bid.

Sarah Loughran, a wheelchair athlete, welcomed the inquiry, saying: "There are a lot of people who want to do sport but not many places they can go to participate."

The inquiry will also examine how disabled tourists can make the most of their visit to the capital by addressing access

to London's hot spots, such as the Tate Modern art gallery.

Dee Doocey, chair of the committee, welcomed participation from all disabled people\* and said: "We must make sure the best facilities are available to our athletes – before, during and after the event."

\* To take part, tel: 020 7983 4000 or see [www.london.gov.uk](http://www.london.gov.uk)

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DN01/06



# Surgery denied to obese patients

BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Disability groups are outraged after primary care trusts (PCT) in East Anglia announced that obese people will no longer have access to knee and hip replacements in a bid to cut costs.

Martin Jones, senior campaign manager for Arthritis Care, said it was "unacceptable" that Ipswich, Suffolk Coastal and Central Suffolk PCTs have made people with a body mass index (BMI) above 30 ineligible for the operation.

The rule is one of a group of "clinical thresholds" that must

now be met before certain surgical procedures are carried out.

Mr Jones said exercise – and lowering BMI – is difficult for some people with arthritis and mobility issues.

He added: "We think it is wrong having a cut-off. You can't draw a line in the sand. They need to consider each patient individually."

A spokeswoman for Ipswich PCT admitted the trust was facing a £19.8 million deficit and that cost was one reason behind the thresholds, but she denied there was a "cash savings" figure attached to them.

However, Dr Brian Keeble, director of public health for Ipswich PCT, said: "We cannot pretend that this work wasn't stimulated by the pressing financial problems of the NHS."

Lisa Doherty, a regional manager for The Obesity Awareness and Solutions Trust, said: "Would a person who has lung cancer from smoking not get treatment?"

"It would be far better to look at the economics – at the effectiveness of how money is spent – than finding a cut-off point for surgery."

## Kids' care backed in new guide

Children with complex disabilities should expect flexible, child-centred holistic care from the moment they are born until early adulthood, according to a new best practice guide launched by the government.

The *Complex Disability Exemplar\** was one of two guides unveiled by the Department of Health (DH) in November to help push forward key objectives in the *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services\*\** introduced in 2004.

The guide calls for children with complex disabilities to have access to specialised education, health and social services.

It also demands better advice and support for parents straight after the birth of a severely disabled child.

Liam Byrne, care services minister, said: "The most disabled children with the most complex needs are at the greatest risk of unequal treatment."

The DH also launched a guide to help improve palliative care services for children with

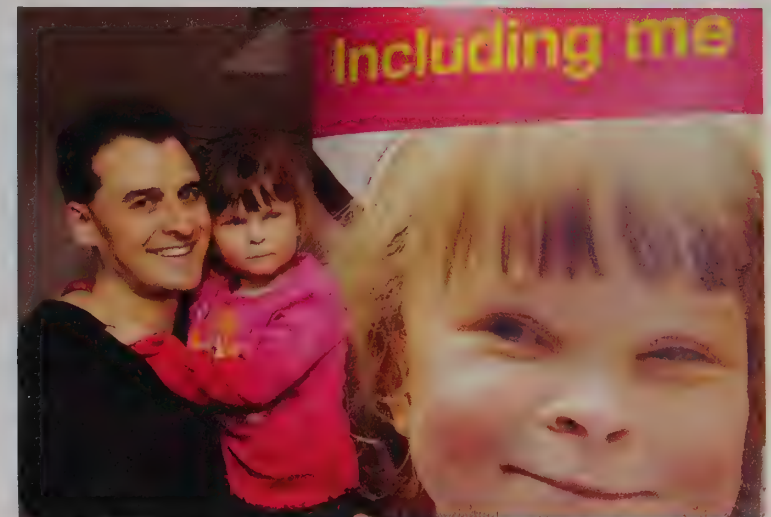
life-threatening conditions.

*Commissioning Children's and Young People's Palliative Care Services\*\** calls for service users, carers and professionals to work together to identify and meet the needs of the child and their family in an individualised and flexible way.

\*Tel: 08701 555 455  
or email [dh@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dh@prolog.uk.com)

\*\*Tel: 08701 555 455  
or see [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## School health procedures can be 'relatively simple'



Benefiting from good practice: Sally Creighton with dad David

Children with complex health needs should find it easier to get the support they need to take a full part in school life, thanks to a new guide\*.

The Health Needs in Education consortium – which includes Mencap and the Council for Disabled Children (CDC) – said some disabled children were still being excluded from schools that could not cope with their health needs.

The consortium's new guide, which is aimed at parents, teachers, health providers and local authorities, says most health procedures needed by children in schools and early years settings were "relatively simple".

Disabled six-year-old Sally Creighton, who has complex

medical needs and features on the guide's cover, attends a special school, even though it has no full-time nurse.

Her father David said: "The school have had a really positive attitude to Sally's medical needs and because of this they've been able to support Sally well."

Christine Lenehan, director of the CDC, said: "Sally's story illustrates what we are striving for and what this guide is designed to do – to ensure that all children, whatever their health needs, take a full part in education, a full part in life."

\**Including me: managing complex health needs in schools and early years settings*, £12.50 from the CDC, tel: 020 7843 1900 or email: [cdc@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cdc@ncb.org.uk)

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# Leading the field



Welsh athlete and sledge hockey star Nathan Stephens (*centre*) beat more than 600 disabled and non-disabled athletes to be crowned National Young Sportsperson 2005 at the OCS Young Sportsperson Awards.

The teenager, ranked world number two for discus, javelin and shot, also scooped the Disabled Young Sportsperson title and a total

prize fund of £13,000.

Posing with BBC sports presenter Sharron Davies, who hosted the ceremony at the Oval cricket ground in November, and Chris Cracknell, OCS chief executive, Stephens said: "My ambitions are ultimately to compete in the Paralympics in Beijing 2008 and London 2012 and this funding will help me so much toward my goals."

# Euro stars

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

England's five-a-side team have secured qualification for next summer's Blind Football World Cup in Argentina, after beating Greece 1-0 in a play-off for third place at the European Blind Football Championships.

Last month's victory, thanks to a strike by David Clarke, made up for the disappointment of failing to make the final after a 3-1 defeat against Spain in the semi-final of the tournament, held in Torremolinos, Spain.

Despite plenty of first-half chances, including two near-

misses from Darren Harris (*right*), England found themselves 2-0 down to Spain at half-time.

At the start of the second half, striker David Clarke pulled a goal back, but the visitors were unable to capitalise on the momentum and failed to draw level.

As England pushed forward in search of the equaliser, Spain exploited England's vulnerability at the back and scored in the dying seconds of the match, to restore their two-goal lead.

Earlier in the tournament, England had to rely on



Portugal to beat Greece in order to progress beyond the group stages.

# Turin in sight for curling champs

Great Britain's wheelchair curling team won the Open Czech Wheelchair Curling Championships in late November, to continue their successful build-up to the 2006 winter Paralympic games in Turin.

The team, made up of Frank Duffy, Michael McCreadie, Tom Killin, Angie Malone and Ken Dickson, produced a convincing performance to beat

Denmark 9-4 in the final and clinch the trophy, despite losing 4-5 to them in the pool stages of the tournament.

They scored two points in each of the opening two ends, before Denmark hit back with two points in the third. Team GB replied with three and two in the following two ends to clinch victory. Denmark's last-ditch effort, scoring two points in the final end, was not

enough to avoid defeat.

Ena Stevenson, GB curling team manager for Turin, said: "The championships in Prague were part of our preparations for Turin. The team played well and we were happy with the outcome."

En route to the final, Great Britain beat Canada 7-3 in the semi-final and Czech club teams Prague, 6-3, and Nove Ms, 9-3, in the pool stages.

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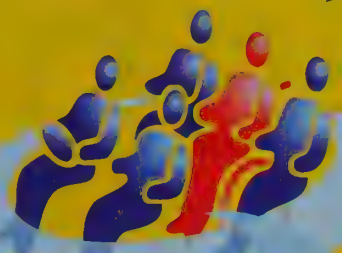


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# Freezing to debt

As forecasters predict the coldest winter in years, Priya Kotecha asks why severely disabled people are still being denied winter fuel payments – when wealthy pensioners receive them as a matter of course

**DN CAMPAIGN**



**J**ohn Cassidy and his family won't wake up to a pile of brightly-wrapped presents under the tree on Christmas Day. Every year, they ask friends and relatives to give them money instead of gifts – so they can pay off their ever-mounting heating bills.

Mr Cassidy, 49, who has severe fibromyalgia and lives in East Sussex with his wife and two sons, says it is the only way they can afford to heat their home during the winter.

"Our fuel bills have gone up by £60 to £70 from last year," he says, "and it takes most of our money to pay these bills."

Despite years of campaigning by *DN* and other disability organisations for winter fuel payments to be paid to severely disabled people under the age of 60, the government's reluctance to do so means Mr Cassidy is just one of thousands of disabled people who will struggle desperately to keep warm during the coming cold winter.

The last big freeze in 1995/6 resulted in 44,000 "excess" winter deaths, compared with 28,000 during milder winters like 2003/4. These figures provide an estimate of the number of people who die every winter due to cold weather.

**'At a time of rising fuel prices, it's only right that those who are disabled don't have to worry about escalating fuel costs'**

Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance, says disabled people could pay the price if the government doesn't introduce the payments immediately. "We could see an increasing number of winter deaths among disabled people. I find it very difficult to understand how the government makes the judgement that this [money for winter fuel payments] is not money well spent."

A spokesman for Unison, Britain's biggest trade union, which backs *DN*'s campaign, says: "At a time of rising fuel



LEO WILKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

**Struggling to keep warm:** Using heaters is a luxury for many disabled people, who end up paying off fuel bills for years

prices, it's only right that those who are disabled don't have to worry about escalating fuel costs."

Experts also agree that cold weather can exacerbate certain conditions, to the extent that some disabled people become completely housebound during the winter.

A spokeswoman for the National Energy Association, which runs Warm Homes – a grant scheme offering a range of heating and insulation measures to vulnerable households – says: "Living in a cold home increases the risk of heart disease, strokes, respiratory illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis, and common ailments like colds and flu. People with a disability or chronic illness are especially vulnerable to the effects of cold homes. Extending winter fuel payments would go some way to protecting this particularly vulnerable group."

Cold winter predictions have worried Natascha Ambrosio, who has struggled to keep her four-year-old disabled son Kyron warm for the past two winters. She says: "I have nurses who look after Kyron at night and they've asked me to get an electric heater, but I just can't afford it."

Others, like Rachel Cooper, who is expecting her third child and lives with her disabled husband and their two sons, are facing mounting fuel bills.

She says: "We're still paying off last year's debt, which started off at £350, but we now have around £200 left to pay. We can't afford to go without the heating, because my husband's pain gets worse and his mobility is impaired."

Disabled people's basic

## WHY WE NEED WINTER CASH

**1** The Met Office has predicted a **"colder than average" winter this year**. The last such winter was ten years ago in 1995/6 when there was an "excess" of 44,000 winter deaths (deaths attributed to cold weather), compared with 28,000 during a mild winter like 2003/4

**2** **Rising fuel costs** mean disabled people are even less likely to be able to afford warm homes this winter. According to the gas and electricity regulator Ofgem, the last two years have seen gas and electricity costs increase by an average of 35 and 27 per cent respectively

**3** **All pensioners are entitled to receive winter fuel payments** – even those who are billionaires

**4** Disabled people often live in **the poorest accommodation**, with inadequate heating and insulation

**5** Disabled people are less likely to have savings and **many cannot work at all**. In a report out in October, more than half of those surveyed by the disability charity Leonard Cheshire had annual incomes of less than £10,000 a year, not enough to meet even their basic needs

**6** Average annual **heating costs for disabled people with medium to high heating needs are more than £1,200 a year**, according to a report commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2004. The charity Disability Alliance said it is concerned that forking out for gas and electricity in the winter is either driving disabled people into further debt, or **forcing them to cut back on other essentials such as food, clothing and going out**

**7** Extending winter fuel payments to 1.27 million severely disabled people would cost the government an extra **£272 million a year compared to the £3 billion (and rising) that the government has spent on the war in Iraq since 2002**

**8** *DN*'s long-running winter fuel campaign, launched in 2000, has been **backed by 2,500 disabled people** to date. An Early Day Motion by Labour MP Roger Berry in 2001 was signed by 156 MPs and his latest EDM, launched last June, has so far been signed by 105 MPs

**9** Disabled people on low incomes and families with disabled children can apply for **cold weather payments** from their local Jobcentre Plus office, if the average temperature has been 0C or below for seven consecutive days. Why not winter fuel payments too?

**10** Disabled people can also apply for **grants from Warm Homes**, a government funded scheme providing a range of heating and insulation measures for vulnerable households

living expenses are higher than those of non-disabled people, with the additional costs of equipment and independent living aids, which can add thousands to outlays.

The government has always argued that Disability Living

Allowance (DLA) is intended to provide a "contribution" towards the extra costs faced by disabled people, including heating. But average heating costs for a disabled household are estimated at more than £1,250 per year – double that of

a non-disabled household. That accounts for nearly a quarter of what someone on the higher rate care and mobility components of DLA could receive.

Certain measures to help some disabled people with fuel



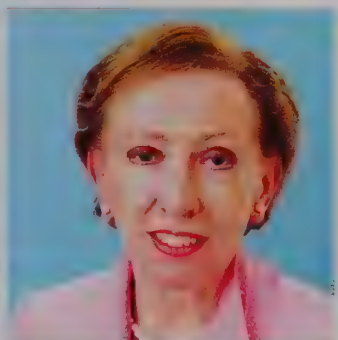


## WHO GETS IT?

### Why the rules are a farce



**Kenneth Maclean, 50**  
**Lives:** Hammersmith, London, has a spinal cord injury  
**Income:** Gets income support and DLA totalling £4,800 a year  
**Entitled to fuel payment? No**  
**Says:** "If I could get winter fuel payments it would mean that I wouldn't worry if it gets cold. To keep warm I put on ten layers of clothes or use the heating and worry about bills later."



**Margaret Beckett, 62**  
**Secretary of state for environment, food and rural affairs**  
**Lives:** London and Derby  
**Income:** At least £133,997 (£59,095 per year MP's salary, plus £74,902 ministerial salary)  
**Entitled to fuel payment? Yes**  
**Says:** Her parliamentary office was unable to comment

bills are in place, such as cold weather payments, which help people on low incomes during periods of very cold weather. But the £8.50 a week entitlement is only available when the average temperature is 0C or below for seven consecutive days, and only 613 vulnerable households have received it between 2003-2005.

Dean Thorpe, from East Sussex, who is 31 and disabled, has received the cold weather payment on two previous occasions, but says it has made little difference. "You can only get them when it gets very cold for a whole week and that doesn't happen often. It's not something you can rely on. Winter fuel payments would make a huge difference and would mean we wouldn't have to worry about costs."

Another major argument used by campaigners is that winter fuel payments are not given to those most in need.

Payments are automatically available to women over 60 and men over 65 – and men aged between 60 and 65 can apply too, if they have retired.

Mary Wilkinson, DN's former editor, who launched the winter fuel campaign, says it is a "ridiculous waste of government money" for non-disabled, comfortably-off pensioners to receive a £200 winter fuel payment.

She says: "As the number of pensioners increases, so will the pay-outs. Yet all the while there are thousands of severely disabled people under 60 who desperately need that money."

Mrs Wilkinson donates her winter fuel payment to the British Polio Fellowship, which then distributes grants to polio survivors to help towards their heating costs.

Despite the overwhelming support for winter fuel

payments for severely disabled people under 60, the Department for Work and Pensions says it has no plans to extend winter fuel payments to disabled people under 60. The future remains a bleak one.

- *Warm Homes Campaign 2005, tel: 08000 720 605, [www.nea.org.uk/Events/Warm\\_Homes\\_Campaign\\_2005](http://www.nea.org.uk/Events/Warm_Homes_Campaign_2005)*
- *British Polio Fellowship, tel: 0800 0180 586, [www.britishpolio.org.uk](http://www.britishpolio.org.uk)*
- *For cold weather payments information, contact your local Jobcentre Plus*
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## COLD CALLS Readers back payments

I have a choice every winter: eat or heat. Being in a wheelchair, my bottom half is inactive, and I feel the cold more in my legs. Loads of clothes make no difference. If anything it is more painful to have more weight on my legs. The idea that DLA is supposed to cover extra heat is a joke. It hardly covers any extra expense. Life with New Labour stinks.

**Gill, Surrey**

I have MS and am a permanent wheelchair user. I feel the cold a lot and my heating bills soar over the winter period. Maybe if the decision makers had a disability that confined them to a wheelchair, winter fuel allowances would make a quicker path through the red tape.

**Lin Edge, Long Eaton, Derbyshire**

It's a struggle at the best of times – and fuel prices have gone up as well. We have enough to cope with without choosing between eating and keeping warm.

**Heather Hirons, 55, Richmond, North Yorkshire**

My motor neurone disease means I feel the cold terribly, even during the summer months. We are struggling to pay last year's fuel bills – I don't know what we will do this year.

**Glen Blake, 46, Worcestershire**

Since Labour came to power my income has grown smaller and smaller. We now have to cut back on heating even though I have a spinal cord injury and my wife has spina bifida. I can no longer afford to live, never mind put the heating on.

**Robert Naether, 54, Llanelli**

I try and get out and go to the library, but it's not the same as being in your own home. I'm a wheelchair user and don't have the same circulation as able-bodied people.

**Kenneth Maclean, 50, Hammersmith**

We manage by cutting back on necessities, which is not easy with two teenagers. The government needs to wake up and realise we are not a minority – there are ten million disabled people

and six million of us cannot work.

**Ian Doy, 44, Rotherham**

If the government insulated both new and old houses, they would not have to fund winter fuel payments. MPs are ignorant about disabled people – maybe there should be more disabled MPs.

**Steven Durham, York**

What concerns me most about the coming winter is the possibility of power cuts. My source of heating is electric. As I am not very mobile, this lack of heating is a major fear. As I am on benefits, I cannot afford to buy alternatives like calor gas.

**Gig, Lancaster**

The winter is a massive thing for our family. Four of us have Nail Patella Syndrome, which affects muscles, tendons and ligaments as well as kidneys and eyes. Because of our condition, we seize up in the cold weather. We're still paying off fuel bills from the winter of 2003, which came to about £3,000. We have to deprive ourselves all through the year because of the bills we are still paying.

**Debra Markham, 42, Devon**

My arthritis means I am not active and my worst time of year is between October and February. My condition gets worse due to the cold and not having sufficient heat means my medication is ineffective.

**Helen Johnson, 30, Hants**

I suffer from vascular and heart disease, which makes me very susceptible to the cold – even in warmer weather. I am dreading this winter. How many more winter fuel deaths must there be before the government acts to protect the disabled?

**Terry Betteridge, Warwickshire**

My father is 72 years old and so healthy it's unfair. He is also not short of cash. How come he can get the winter fuel grant and I can't? The whole system is unfair. Why should people with disabilities be discriminated against?

**Sue Cartledge, North Wales**

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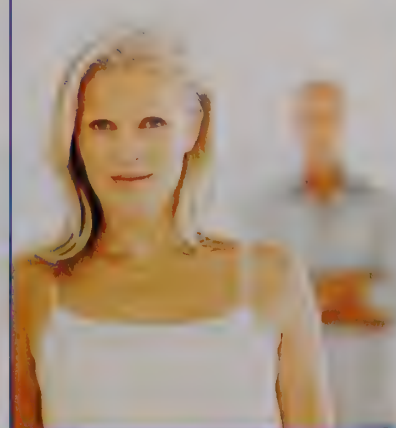
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# The flight test

Weak discrimination law means airlines set their own rules on provision for disabled people and service can be poor, so Scope arranged a test flight with a large group of passengers. Elizabeth Choppin joined them.

**D**espite it being the 21st century, travelling for disabled people is not as effortless as it should be. In fact, it is often downright gruelling. Inaccessible facilities, damaged or lost equipment and insensitive staff are probably the greatest barriers to smooth journeys, but they are by no means the only ones.

And perhaps the form of transport that presents the greatest barrier is air travel.

Disabled flyers are currently at the mercy of airlines' willingness to comply with a voluntary code of practice for accessible services, as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) does not cover air and sea transport.

The many stories about poor service from airlines caused Scope to focus its Time To Get Equal transport campaign day, on 1 December, on air travel.

Some airlines have better reputations for service than others, so Scope campaigners decided to find out why certain companies are able to meet the needs of disabled passengers while others, particularly Ryanair, say provision must be restricted.

The Irish airline has been in hot water recently for kicking nine blind passengers off a

flight minutes before take-off (DN, November), saying it had exceeded its quota of four disabled passengers per flight.

So, on a cold December morning, a crew of six disabled people and Scope staff members set out to Birmingham International airport to catch an Aer Lingus flight to Dublin and back.

With three wheelchair users, a deaf person and two people with mobility impairments – which exceeds Ryanair's quota – Scope wanted to find out how a larger group of disabled people would travel and be treated.

**'The staff member then informed her that disabled people who can walk on the aeroplane are called staggerers'**

With only a small delay at check-in due to a mix-up in names, the journey began smoothly. The only hitches during the day were related to airport staff.

In Birmingham a guard hollered after a deaf member of the group, Elizabeth Gomes, to stop and go back through the metal detector as it was beeping. When she did not stop,

he said "excuse me" several times, more loudly, even though she had a visible hearing aid. She said she felt embarrassed and nervous about it.

Cat Hudson, Scope's equality campaign manager, said she was "quite surprised" by some of the language used by staff. "I was asked if I was a wheelchair... I said, 'no, I'm not a wheelchair'." The staff member then informed her that disabled people who can walk on the aeroplane are called staggerers."

Speaking about how she and Elizabeth were treated, Ms Hudson said: "Aer Lingus maybe needs to think about their systems of communication. A lot is about embarrassment and staff not being equipped to deal with situations. But it's the duty of employers to equip them [with disability equality training]."

But Antoinette Farrell-Jones, general manager of transport services at Birmingham, said all staff had received training and were now getting additional guidance on how to lift disabled people who need extra support.

Once in Dublin, the team delivered Scope's new transport charter to the head office of Ryanair, albeit to a receptionist as there was no



Airborne: Above, passengers getting ready for the flight. Below, Cat Hudson (left) and passenger Barry Morgan present Scope's transport charter to a Ryanair receptionist



senior manager available.

The charter outlines the demands of many campaigners, that DDA exemptions for air and sea transport should be removed, and follows DN's three-year Flight Rights campaign for airlines to properly address the issue of wheelchair damage. The document also calls for disability equality training for all transport staff.

Natalie Salmon, head of access to services and transport for the Disability Rights Commission, told DN later that it did not make sense to exempt certain modes of transport from the DDA.

She added: "We're lobbying

for change. As long as the DDA does not cover air travel, carriers like Ryanair will be able to go on discriminating against disabled people."

Ryanair was certainly cited as the worst offender for poor service from airport staff on both sides of the Irish sea, including Ken Cattell, of Birmingham's passenger services team, who said: "Most airlines are alright, except Ryanair."

Most of Scope's group were happy with the treatment they received from Aer Lingus in both Birmingham and Dublin.

Passenger Barry Morgan said: "It's not been a bad trip at all, actually. It's been a lot better than I expected. So if Aer Lingus can do it, then Ryanair can do it too."

Anthony Bland, regional operations manager of Aer Lingus, said his company found no reason for quotas, nor was it "rocket science" to avoid discriminating against disabled people.

He pointed out that Aer Lingus had a commercial interest in accommodating disabled passengers as they want them to be return customers.

Ms Hudson said: "It's about looking at best practice and saying 'it can be done', and it's down to the attitudes of the various airlines."

But a spokesman for Ryanair told DN: "We carry hundreds of thousands of disabled passengers each year. Our policy is certainly not profit-based. It is safety driven."

"We have a limit of four disabled people [per flight] and the reason why is that we only have four crew members on board. In the unlikely event of having to disembark the aircraft, which is an operation that requires extreme speed, cabin crew have to ensure everybody gets off."

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# THE INFLUENCE LIST

DN is searching for the UK's **most influential disabled people** and is asking **YOU** to make the nominations. Later this year, a panel of leading disabled people will draw up a final list of those you have nominated, to show who has **the most significant impact on the lives of all people living in the UK**.

We are not giving out awards and we are not searching for the most popular disabled person – instead we want to find those disabled people who have an impact on the public, whether they come from the worlds of politics, business, media, entertainment, the arts, sport or the disability movement itself.

**Who do you think has the most influence?** Is it a disabled politician whose policies affect millions? Is it a journalist whose stories shape public views? Make your nomination by filling in the form below or visiting *DNOnline*.



## OUR CHOICES Three leading disabled people make their nominations

Actor **Luke Hamill** chooses: **David Edwards**, businessman and motor sports fanatic



“Many people haven’t heard of David Edwards, but it is unlikely their lives have not been influenced by him in some way. David owns London Special Risks, the City of London’s last remaining shipping insurance business, which allows the goods we take for granted in modern life to be transported across the world. Very few consumer goods are made in the UK these days and there is every chance that David’s company has helped bring these goods to the country.

“In 1998, he took up motor sports. Having competed in 80 races here and abroad, winning five trophies against opposition that includes touring car champions, David now has fans across the globe. He is also a trustee of the charity ASPIRE, which helps people with spinal cord injuries to regain their independence and to reintegrate back into society at home, work, through education and sport.

“Did I mention that David picked up a complete spinal cord injury 13 years ago?

“I cannot think of anyone who has been more influential.”

MP **Anne Begg** chooses: **David Blunkett**, MP and ex-Cabinet minister



“I nominate David Blunkett. He has been a council leader, is an MP and was, until recently, a high-ranking, valued and well-respected Cabinet minister. In that time he has proved there are no limits to the potential achievements of anyone who has a visual impairment.

“For those of us with different disabilities he has been an inspiration, an icon even, who has made it easier for us to overcome the discrimination we face.

“Although he is no longer in the cabinet, no-one has ever questioned his ability to do a highly pressured, difficult job and because of his achievements no-one can ever say that disability rules someone out from reaching the top.

“The reforms David piloted through parliament in education and home affairs will have affected the lives of almost every person in the UK today.

“He has been so successful that many people have stopped noticing he is blind, nor does anyone ever make any allowance for his disability. He wouldn’t thank them if they did.”

The DRC’s **Bert Massie** chooses: **Gordon Brown**, chancellor & **Lord Ashley**, peer



“Many prominent disabled people make little reference to their disability, including former *Guardian* editor Peter Preston, but few have been as influential as chancellor Gordon Brown, who has vision in one eye only.

“Gordon guides much of social policy and few ministers can decide major policy unless he has been consulted. Only the Prime Minister can overrule him. His tax credit schemes have distributed wealth in favour of poorer people and he is key in the government’s welfare reform.

“Lord Jack Ashley has also affected politics considerably, with more than 30 years experience as one of the most effective campaigners for disabled people in both houses of parliament.

“He lost his hearing as a backbench Labour MP during the Harold Wilson government and in the late 1960s founded the All Party Disablement Group (APDG), which he now chairs.

“Disabled people have many competent friends in politics but for positive practical influence few can match Jack.”

## SEND US YOUR NOMINATIONS

Send this form to the address below or fill it out online. All entries will have a chance of winning a £50 prize draw.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you disabled? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you employed by a disability organisation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you belong to any disability organisation(s)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, which one/s? \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us, in no more than 100 words for each person, who you think the UK’s most influential disabled people are and why? (You can name more than one and continue on a separate sheet of paper):

Would you like your nomination to remain confidential (anonymous quotes may be used)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Send your nominations to “Influential people”, Freepost, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW or fill in our online form at [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)

Entries without names, contact details and employment/membership declaration will not be accepted.



# Coming to *DN* in 2006...

*DN* welcomes ten new columnists to the paper this year, as well as some old favourites. They will rotate on a monthly basis, offering opinions on the latest events and their personal experiences. Newcomers Phil Friend and Ivy Broadhead will begin their columns next month

## TOP TALK What the opinion-makers are thinking

### Jane Campbell

Jane Campbell is chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence.

Before this she was chair of the British Council of Disabled People. She is also a DRC commissioner.

In 2006, she hopes Lord Joffe's Assisted Dying Bill "will die during its passage through the Lords". She would also like to see government support for the proposed Right to Independent Living Bill. Finally, she hopes politicians will embrace the *Improving Life Chances* strategy.



### Nick Danagher

Nick Danagher is executive director of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL).

He has been involved with the disabled people's movement since 1993. In 2006, Nick says centres for independent living should receive more funding – equal to that given to race equality councils. He also hopes the government's proposed National Forum of Organisations of Disabled People will "be placed genuinely under the control of disabled people".



### Phil Friend

Phil Friend is chair of RADAR and co-owner of the disability consultancy and training firm Churchill, Minty and Friend. His CV boasts membership of, or association with, the Employers' Forum on Disability, the Association of Disabled Professionals and the Prince Charles' Disability Partnership. He was awarded an OBE in 2001 for his services to disabled people.

He is a regular contributor to national television and radio.



### Simone Aspis

Simone is a veteran campaigner who currently works as parliamentary and campaigns development worker for the British Council of Disabled People. She has demonstrated with the Disabled People's Direct Action Network and is a disability spokesperson for the Greens.

She would like to see welfare reform that replaces means-tested benefits with a simple formula – a basic income for all that includes an allowance to cover additional costs for being disabled.



## CELEB SCENE The stars in their own words

### Tanni Grey Thompson

Regular columnist Tanni Grey Thompson is the UK's most successful disabled athlete, having won 16 Paralympic medals, 11 of them gold. Her sporting achievements, work for charities and media appearances earned her a Damehood last year.

She played a key part in securing the 2012 Paralympics for London



and has appeared on a host of celebrity gameshows, including *Mastermind*.

Tanni is a member of the prestigious Laureus World Sports Academy, alongside the likes of Pele and Michael Jordan.

### Francesca Martinez

Comedian Francesca Martinez made her TV debut in 1994 as the new girl at the BBC's *Grange Hill*. Her rise through the comedy circuit led to *The Observer* naming her "The fastest-rising female comic in the country".

Most recently she appeared in *Extras*. She has a busy 2006 lined up, with plans for a BBC comedy based on her life,



which she hopes will lead to a series. She says: "It has long been an ambition of mine to produce an entertaining and groundbreaking mainstream show which stars a disabled actor."

### Danny Crates

Danny Crates is a gold-medal winning Paralympic champion who has also notched up wins at the European and World Indoor Championships. He was a rising star in rugby until he lost his arm in an accident, when he started running instead.

Danny is also a fitness instructor, scuba diver and has regularly appeared on



TV, including *Ready Steady Cook!*

In the coming months, he is going for two unclaimed titles, the first in the World Cup and the second in the World Championships.

## WORLD VIEW The decision-makers in Europe and beyond

### Richard Howitt

Richard Howitt, a regular *DN* columnist and the only one who is not disabled, is president of the European Parliament's All Party Disability Rights Group of MEPs and has been a Labour politician in Europe since 1994.

In 2006, he says he will welcome changes to the European Union (EU) funding rules, which will



mean that every new EU-funded building will be forced to have proper access. In addition, Richard hopes Europe will be key in implementing the UN disability convention.

### Yannis Vardakastanis

Yannis Vardakastanis is president of the European Disability Forum and he chairs several committees in European government. He has been president of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind and managing director of the National Institute for the Protection of Deaf and Hard of Hearing People.

In 2006, Yannis wants



legislation that will allow Europe's 50 million disabled people full integration into society so that they can go to school, work, travel, surf the internet and have a family.

### Abigail Lock

Abigail Lock is equality campaign officer at Scope. She has previously lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for a disabled children's charity.

With a degree in Gender and International Development, focusing on disability, Abigail is particularly interested in international relations, politics and travel.



She hopes the UN convention on the rights of disabled people will be agreed in 2006 and that it will strengthen bonds between groups of and for disabled people worldwide.

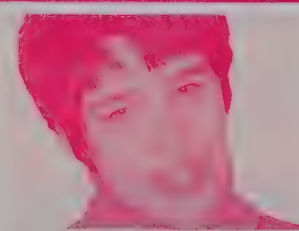
## YOUTH SPEAK The next generation have their say

### Kate Caryl

Kate Caryl, 22, continues writing for *DN* this year. She has just completed an HND in performing arts in the community and is studying for a degree in the same subject.

As a communication aid user, she volunteers for 1Voice Communicating Together – a support group for families with children who use aids.

In 2006 she hopes the



government extends funding for communication aids for all those that need them.

She says: "Here we are in this new century without any statutory right to a voice."

### Ivy Broadhead

Ivy Broadhead, 17, is from Gateshead, where she lives with her "overly complicated family and two cats". She is studying for A-levels and considering university applications. She says she was "born with restricted growth and has since developed a terminal case of sarcasm".

In 2006 she hopes she hopes to be accepted at a



"good" university. To do this, she must "sort out piles of Disabled Students' Allowance and student loan forms and achieve the impossible – finding the perfect pair of shoes for size 13 feet".

### John Stanton

21-year-old John Stanton will be *DNExtra's* first columnist. He has a visual impairment and is studying for a post-graduate diploma in journalism at Cardiff Uni.

He worries the education system is unrepresentative. "As I prepare to leave higher education, I would like to report that I've met people of all abilities, creeds and



colours, but I can't".

He adds: "Higher education is overwhelmingly white, middle class and non-disabled. Perhaps, in a perfect 2006, the intake of graduates will be more diverse."





## KEY NOTES

### ANDY RICKELL:

The social model of disability needs much wider support if new policies are to succeed

The government deserves credit for its white paper *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*. It is the closest yet that policy-makers have come to acknowledging the social model of disability. The model, developed by disabled people, shows that disability is a form of discrimination – disablism – and it must be addressed through social change.

A problem arises, however, in trying to implement the paper because disability policy until now has been based on the medical model of disability. This treats disability as a personal problem that the impaired individual should deal with in order for them to be included by society.

The government must tackle this culture clash between the paper's goals and the current organisational and policy framework. It says it supports the social model, but developing policies based on the model depends on stakeholders understanding it; sadly, many, including policy-makers, service commissioners and disabled people, do not.

As recently as 2002, a survey – commissioned by the British Council of Disabled People – of more than 200 grass-roots disabled people, found that only three per cent of them had heard of the social model. But this is not disabled people's fault. There has been no incentive for service providers to tell disabled people about the

model and how it challenges the way society works.

The one group keen to inform disabled people is the disabled people's movement, but members are under-resourced to do so.

There is an urgent need to improve the self-identity of disabled people and their understanding of the model, so that useful feedback can be offered to ensure that *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* will work.

While I hope more than three per cent of policymakers and professionals understand the social model, it can only be used for real service reform if it is strongly supported by disabled people and professionals, who are involved at every stage of planning.

We also need good quality disability equality training, delivered by disabled people.

And we need everybody involved to know the theory. This can be best learnt through books like *Disability Politics*, by Jane Campbell and Mike Oliver, *The Politics of Disablement*, by Oliver, and *Disabled People in Britain and Discrimination*, by Colin Barnes.

*Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* challenges the status quo, but it will only succeed if it has advocates committed to seeing it through, from ministers to individual disabled people. Andy Rickell is Scope's executive director for diversity, politics and planning

Andy will be writing a column every month. Before Scope, he was chief executive of the British Council of Disabled People. He is a Methodist preacher and has been a councillor. In 2006, Andy looks forward to the opening of the Office for Disability Issues, supported by the National Forum for Organisations of Disabled People, and hopes it achieves commitment across government for full implementation of *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*.



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# What's in a name?

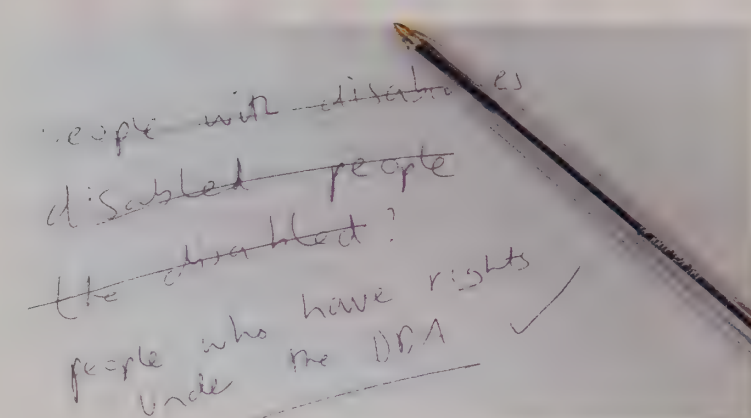
We need to rethink the way we refer to disability if the law is to acknowledge the true number of disabled people, writes Agnes Fletcher

According to government figures, there are ten million people in Britain who meet the Disability Discrimination Act's (DDA) definition of disability. That's one in five of us. From 5 December, this figure also includes people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis from the point of diagnosis.

While a social model perspective holds that a wide range of people can be disabled – and therefore in need of legal protection – around half of the disabled people surveyed in 2003 by the Department of Work and Pensions did not actually consider themselves to be disabled. Further research by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) showed that many believed that to be disabled you had to be a wheelchair user, bedridden or terminally ill. That means there's a huge number of people who have rights under the law who are not considered to be disabled.

Does this matter? Yes, because whether it is advice about rights or benefits, if you don't think the information is for you, you might ignore it.

For those with legal duties, saying that there are ten million disabled people with a combined



### Rebranding: Language shapes perceptions and must change over time

spending power of £80 billion a year tests credibility because it doesn't accord with their perceptions – one in five of us aren't using wheelchairs or white sticks.

At the same time, debates on Incapacity Benefit in the tabloids suffer from the widespread assumption that disability is something visible, "severe" and fixed – something you have from birth or following an accident. Fluctuating health conditions are all but ignored.

The DRC's response to this challenge is to refer not to "disabled people" but to "people who have rights under the DDA". We still use the term "disabled people" when speaking about particular groups of people in disabling

situations and about those active in the disability rights movement. We also try to ensure a full range of examples in our communications – of individuals, of disabling barriers and of reasonable adjustments, to help shape people's perception of what can disable.

This is no rejection of the social model, which is at the heart of the DRC's mission. Instead, the new term recognises the power of language to shape perception (and that language and perceptions change over time) – acknowledging that to be effective, it helps to listen as much as to speak.

Agnes Fletcher is assistant director, communications, at the DRC



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# Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the acting editor Sarah Hobson, Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, minicom: 020 7619 7332, fax: 020 7619 7331, email: [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)

## What's new for 2006?

**F**irstly, I would like to wish all readers a happy New Year. I rarely use this page, as it should be packed with your thoughts, but it is important to flag up some changes designed to update *DN* in 2006.

Our main addition is our new team of columnists (*page 20*), picked to reflect the diverse range of interests and experiences of our many readers. Many of them you will know, and most are close to the disability movement.

We have also launched our search for the UK's most influential disabled people (*page 19*). Please send your nominations and encourage family, friends, carers and colleagues to do the same. It will be a fun, and hopefully democratic and rigorous, way to find out more about how leading disabled people shape the way we live.

*DN*'s problem page has also expanded (*pp. 40-41*). Regular agony aunt Rachel Wilson continues to answer your queries, but she is joined by Simon Parritt, a counselling psychologist with an interest in sexuality and disability, who will answer your relationship questions. There is also a new section where you can help others to solve their problems using your own experiences.

On a practical level, we have redesigned and brought forward the ever-popular Easykit (*page 38*). Finally, we have added Webwatch (*opposite*), a new space for our online visitors' views.

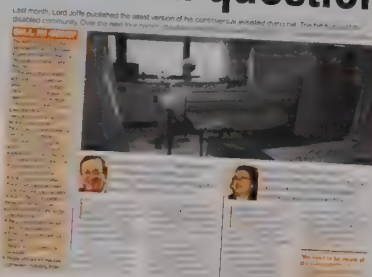
These changes are designed to get even more disabled people talking in *DN*, but they will only work if more readers get involved, whether to pose questions, offer expertise or give feedback on *DN* generally. Keep in touch as we enter the new year. Sarah Hobson, acting editor

## Assisted dying bill debated

Last month, *DN* published a special report on Lord Joffe's assisted dying bill (*right*). Shortly after, our website received an unprecedented flood of feedback forms, all backing the bill. *DN* investigated whether this feedback had been manipulated, and the Voluntary Euthanasia Society confirmed it had emailed supporters encouraging them to contact us. We therefore decided that all feedback on assisted dying would temporarily be removed from the website. This was a difficult decision as it deprived our regular readers of their voices, but it was the only choice in the circumstances. Instead, we are publishing two of the letters we later received, one from each side of the debate.

14 News focus special

### The final question



## Right to life is only right I have left

I was desperately disappointed to find that I could not add my views to your website on Lord Joffe's assisted dying bill.

I was late in responding because I have just taken a long time to recover from both pneumonia (on top of emphysema), part of my disability, Marfan syndrome, and a bout of pneumothorax.

My life is hell because I have insufficient money for heating, an adequate diet or transport. I

frequently feel suicidal because of this, and because I receive inadequate medical care and have insufficient income to meet my needs.

I do not drink – and wouldn't if I had the money; I just want to be able to live a life that is useful and rewarding.

I am not entitled to ordinary dignity. I am not entitled to sufficient heat to keep warm. I am not entitled to human companionship – I have never

had a chance to make friends because of the lack of transport.

The right to stay alive as long as I can bear the conditions is the only right I have left. I really do not want that taken away as it eventually would be were this law to be passed.

I apologise if this is badly written. Five years without social communication is not conducive to ordered anything. Alison Hunt, by email

## Wife's death has shaped my views

You appear to have removed the rights of people like me from contributing to the discussion on assisted dying. Is this because I am prejudiced?

It is true that my views in favour of voluntary euthanasia – with "proper regulation", if those are the right words – are based on the very painful experience of watching my wife

die of motor neurone disease, and I suppose that makes me prejudiced.

It is ironic that, despite the law, she was given an avenue to end her life in a relatively civilised and comfortable way. We were thankful for these means, which she astutely worked out for herself, and grateful to those who appeared to be so empathetic and compassionate.

I supported the justice4diane

[Pretty] campaign because of this experience and wanted to contribute to the debate.

I consider that I, and no doubt others like me, are well qualified to cast an opinion. For you to exclude us seems to me to be interfering with freedom of expression.

I understand the concerns against the bill, but they should be covered by what I have referred to as proper regulation. Gordon Shaw, by email

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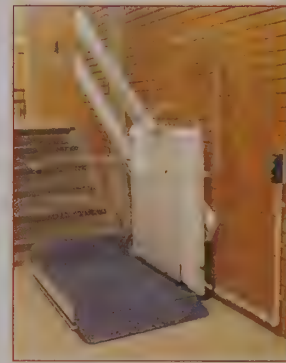
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# web watch

All the latest from the Disability Now forums and Have your say pages, found at [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)

## DLA application was refused: what now?

I have a pregnancy-related illness. My first application for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was refused. I was advised to ask for a reconsideration as my illness had progressed and I had further information about it. I rang them and told them this but I was refused. I really don't know what to do. I can go for appeal, but I can't afford to live now. I have been assessed as critical by social services. I am so upset – I can't take this anymore.

Lisa

## Get advice and then appeal

Benefit forms have become traps, so many questions about walking and care – make one mistake and you have lost. An appeal is different, most appeals win or at least win some of the claim, so you must appeal. Talk to somebody about this, either a disability advisor, the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) or DIAL UK. You need advice on how to go forward and get everything sorted so you have a better chance of winning; this means getting social services to do a report, your GP and any consultants you have seen.

Rob

## A welfare rights specialist can help your case

Sorry to hear that the DWP turned you down, but all is not lost. You need to put in an appeal now. You can do so by downloading the GL24 form from [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) – it can take a week or more before the DWP send one.

You also need help from a welfare rights specialist. Your local CAB may help. If not contact the Community Legal Services on 0845 345 4345. Over 70 per cent of DLA claimants who attend an appeal with representation have their appeal upheld. Full information can be found at [www.appeals-service.gov.uk](http://www.appeals-service.gov.uk)

Jim

## Animal magic – why we love our pets

I have chickens and I am delighted when I watch them in my garden, scratching about for bugs. They have an effect on me that medicine does not. As I sit and watch, time passes so quickly and I feel a calmness fill my aching joints. The pain ebbs away for a while.

Den

The therapeutic value of pets is well known and documented. Charities such as Pets As Therapy ([tel: 0870 977 0003](http://tel:08709770003), [www.petsas-therapy.org](http://www.petsas-therapy.org)) have networks of volunteers who take dogs, cats and even rabbits to hospitals and hospices. Studies have also shown that pet owners have on average seven years more life than non-pet owners.

Witchybaby

I wouldn't want to come home if my two cats weren't here, especially Tink, who welcomes me home like a dog. Without them to look after, I would become extremely insular and depressed. Stroking an animal is well known to reduce stress and blood pressure. It's a good way to relax and a superb form of meditation.

Dogposhpaws

## Cannabis helps me

I have MS and am pleased to hear I may soon be able to get cannabis on prescription. I know from experience that it helps with pain, spasticity, sleep and bladder problems.

I have friends with spinal pain, cerebral palsy, lupus and ME who all find that cannabis works too, but if we buy it from a dodgy guy in the pub, not only is it expensive, we also can't tell how good it is.

Sue

## Perseverance pays

I emailed our local independent cinema, the Phoenix in Oxford, to ask them where the ramp and disabled loo was. They ignored me. I wrote to them again and they wrote back to tell me that it was impossible to fit them, that there was no room. So I wrote again, as did someone else, telling them they should get their act together. Now, at last, they have a lift and a disabled loo. Perseverance pays!

Alistair Muir

Have your say and join others chatting at [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)

## back chat

• The paper that gave us "Bonkers Bruno Locked Up" – and a subsequent grovelling apology – has obviously not learned its lesson.

*The Sun* reported how I'm A Celebrity's Kimberley Davies injured her spine leaping from a helicopter.

The actress asked medics: "Am I paralysed?" Fair enough, except *The Sun's* front-page read: "TV KIM: AM I CRIPPLED?"

Excellent timing, as the paper unveiled its new star columnist David Blunkett.

• The paper was even more offensive when reporting the government's decision to appoint someone with learning difficulties as a joint learning difficulties "tsar".

Apparently "angry campaigners" branded this a "politically correct gimmick".

Some advice for *The Sun*: read the 1998 Independent Longcare Inquiry report and its appalling catalogue of sexual and physical abuse at two care homes. It shows why it is vital to listen to people with learning difficulties, rather than just support staff.



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Renault Kangoo 1.4 Petrol	RL02 FWU	Red	3 Seats, Ramp	18,524	<b>8,795</b>
Renault Kangoo 1.2 Petrol	PN04 KBX	Green	3 Seats, Ramp	12,863	<b>9,995</b>
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Citroen Berlingo 1.9 D 5DR	YD02 WSZ	Red	3 Seats, Ramp	25,000	<b>9,495</b>
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# Sex, signing and socialism

Clive Mason was the first person to sign on the BBC's *See Hear*, long before deaf culture and BSL became mainstream. Elizabeth Choppin meets the man dubbed the Tom Cruise of the deaf world

**F**ew people have done more to highlight issues facing deaf people than Clive Mason, the long-standing presenter of BBC's *See Hear*.

Clive was the first to use British Sign Language (BSL) on the show, presenting subjects of huge importance for viewers, such as how disabled people were affected during the Holocaust.

Twenty years on and he continues to inspire and impress. At the recent Remark! Awards for deaf media he was given a lifetime achievement award, the judges heralding him as a "deaf icon", not only for introducing BSL into people's living rooms, but also for inspiring many deaf people to pursue careers in the media.

While he is proud of his contribution to breaking down barriers, he says he is not in the limelight for the glory. "They probably gave me the lifetime achievement award because I'm getting old. They wanted to give it to me before I die," he jokes.

Clive says he did not seek

## WHO IS HE?

Clive Mason was born in Glasgow and began learning BSL at the age of five. He started his working life building boats, before starting presenting on BBC's *See Hear* in 1984. He has since lectured at universities, trained BSL interpreters and now works as a media consultant. He lives in London with his partner Claire.

out a career in television; instead, it found him. In his younger "staunch socialist" days in his native Glasgow, he joined forces with a deaf academic, Paddy Ladd, who was researching aspects of BSL at a local polytechnic. Clive had decided to attend college after being made redundant from a factory and says he stumbled into the BBC after being seen on BSL videos made as part of the research.

"It goes to show the BBC was ahead of its time in raising awareness of deaf issues. *See Hear* was very progressive," he points out, adding that they were extremely supportive of

his needs from day one.

Still, Clive says, the world was a different place for deaf people when he started out. "Back then, recognition of BSL as a language equivalent to other world languages existed only in books as part of emerging research. Discrimination was part of everyday life, apart from at the *See Hear* office.

"Me and my deaf colleagues spent a lot of time combating discrimination and putting forward the view that deaf people can live and work on an equal basis. Years later, there are many deaf people with degrees and PhDs; there are deaf-led organisations and, within the media itself, deaf producers, directors, actors... the list is endless."

Clive downplays his influence and his near-legendary status in the deaf world, but others suggest the combination of his passion for his work, approachability and much acclaimed sex appeal did not hurt his meteoric rise to fame. "One time I woke up on



the train to find a crowd of people hovering over me, taking pictures," he says. "It was strange. I didn't like it very much at all," he said.

But having been called "the first deaf sex symbol" and even the "Tom Cruise of the deaf world", Clive says he has grown more comfortable with attention from fans – however irrelevant he feels the labels are to his work.

In the beginning, Clive says, he would refuse to sign autographs because he did not support the idea that he was more important than others. "If someone approached me, I would shake his or her hand instead. I think it was because I was such a strong socialist at the time. I'd ask them questions about themselves – ask what their job was."

Clive started at a school for deaf children aged five. Until that point, he was not taught sign language and felt isolated because he could not fully communicate with people. He feels BSL would benefit both deaf and hearing children as part of the national curriculum, because, he says, the visual stimulation is "exercise for the brain".

"For children learning BSL, it can be fun. Children are very receptive to learning languages. For deaf children, particularly those who are educated in a mainstream school, having hearing peers who can use sign language does wonders for their confidence and self-esteem."

"In the future this could result in wider access across society. Whether it is a shop or the doctor's surgery, more deaf and hearing people would be able to communicate directly."

But Clive is pleased more people than ever are learning BSL. "Sometimes I ask people why they have decided to learn BSL and they tell me they have a deaf neighbour, or one of their work colleagues is deaf. Some people say they were looking to take a course and thought it looked interesting.

**'They probably gave me the lifetime achievement award because I'm getting old. They wanted to give it to me before I die'**

It's a fantastic thing," he says.

Clive was recently involved in preparing the signed interpretation of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, which will be seen at selected Vue cinemas. In the future, Clive would like to direct feature length films but is keen to remain in the industry he has helped to shape.

Is there one moment, or one experience, that crystallises his distinguished career? "I remember how much I enjoyed meeting 'real' deaf people out on location shoots," Clive says. "They were my favourite people. The information they provided gave me the material to present with." As ever, Clive Mason is a man of the people.



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# Time to get equal

## Equality in Enterprise

To mark Enterprise Week 2005, Scope offered a number of opportunities for budding disabled entrepreneurs.

Young disabled people from around the UK were invited to a seminar in London to present their ideas. Paul Appleyard, Head of Diversity Works at Scope, said: "We were impressed by the participants' enthusiasm and talent. Strong ideas included 'Beat Workin' by Jasper Field. This aims to get disabled people involved in club and music promotion".

Research by the Small Business Service shows that disabled people are more likely to be self-employed than non-disabled people. Of those in paid work 18% of disabled men and 8% of disabled women are self-employed, compared to 14% non-disabled men and 6% of women. Despite this, disabled people face more barriers. Recent research has shown that disablism in financial institutions reduces the chances of disabled people finding start-up capital for their projects. In recognition of this problem with



financing, Scope patron and entrepreneur David Grayson endowed the first of five annual bursaries for young disabled Britons. The winning applicant, 18-year-old Karen Sutherland, was awarded £2,000. Karen plans to use the bursary to pursue a life in film and television.

Details on how to apply for next year's Time to Get Equal Enterprise bursary will be available next summer.

## Diversity and Journalism



On Saturday 12 November Kate Lawler announced the winners of the NUS/Daily Mirror Student Journalism Awards, 2005.

Hundreds of students descended on London for the ceremony at the Marriot, West India Quay. Sarah Hobson, acting editor of DN, presented the Scope-sponsored Diversity Award.

Scope's Assistant Director for Diversity, Politics and Planning, Andy Rickell, judged. He joined an

impressive panel, which included journalists from Channel Four and Heat. They spent months deliberating over a record number of entries.

Hatq Mohammed of Demon magazine at De Montfort University won the Diversity Award.

Daily Mirror Editor Richard Wallace said: "This year's competition was the best yet. I'm continually amazed by the standards of student journalism".

Cat Hudson, Scope's Time to Get Equal manager (pictured with Sarah and NUS president Kat Fletcher), said: "Today's student journalists are tomorrow's opinion formers. So we are delighted that the NUS are working with us to tackle disablism".



## Travel Sick?

Thanks to Time to Get Equal campaigners, pictured here on 1 December, for supporting Scope's bid to lift the DDA exemption on air and sea travel. A report will be launched in February 2006 to discuss the findings of the Time to Get Equal Transport campaign.

[www.timetogetequal.org.uk](http://www.timetogetequal.org.uk)

For information on the Time to Get Equal campaign  
call: 020 7619 7710  
or email: [equality.campaign@scope.org.uk](mailto:equality.campaign@scope.org.uk)



# Out with the old.

As 2006 begins, it is time to reflect on recent events that have affected disabled people. Comedian Laurence Clark reminds us of high-profile moments that have stuck in his mind and Douglas Campbell, former executive director of The Disabled Drivers' Association, gives his hopes for the coming 12 months...

## Laurence Clark



I normally spend thousands of pounds on publicists in order to get media coverage for my stand-up shows. This year, however, one predictable, crap joke by the Prime Minister's sidekick Cherie Blair – about me being a “sit down” comic – got me splashed across every tabloid in the country. I guess what counts nowadays is not the joke itself but who is telling it.

But what I most remember from 2005 is not my own career, it is that more disabled people have been visible on our television screens.

My favourite portrayal was by deaf actress Ali Briggs playing Freda, Emily Bishop's niece, in five episodes of *Coronation Street* (below). It is such a shame the writers will not bring her back and give her



some scenes that do not just revolve around her impairment. I would have paid serious money to see her in a romantic plotline with the *Street*'s busybody Norris.

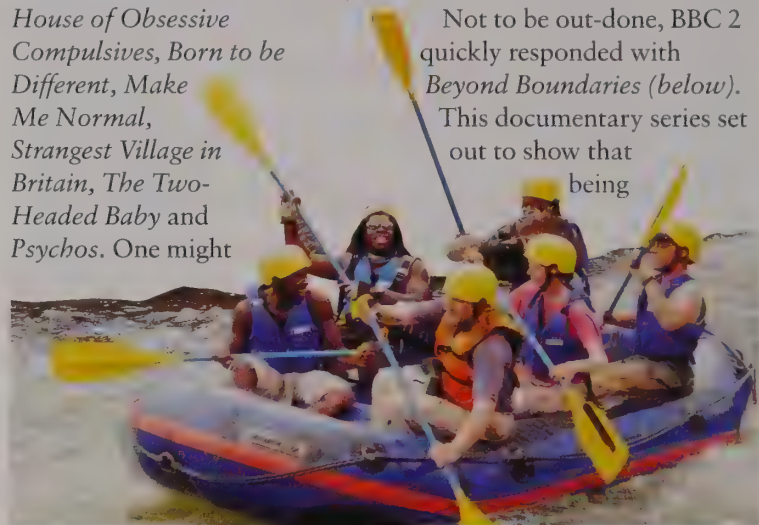
As if to counter-balance this positive step forward, ITV also gave us Caroline Quentin, the non-disabled actress, in *Footprints in the Snow*. This two-hour drama, about a woman coping with becoming paralysed, managed to include every disability stereotype in the book – I was ticking them off one-by-one as I watched. It became a source of endless jokes among my friends.

Another unwelcome TV event of 2005 was the Channel 4

9pm documentary, which was always a freak show for the 21st century. Barely a summer's evening went by without one of these docu-tragedies, including *House of Obsessive Compulsives*, *Born to be Different*, *Make Me Normal*, *Strangest Village in Britain*, *The Two-Headed Baby* and *Psychos*. One might

be forgiven for thinking that their sole purpose was to keep ex-Doctor Whos Christopher Eccleston and Paul McGann in narration work.

Not to be out-done, BBC 2 quickly responded with *Beyond Boundaries* (below). This documentary series set out to show that being



## JANUARY

- DN launched guidelines for journalists on the reporting of disability issues in its new Hacked Off Guide. It came as the Press Complaints Commission was criticised for failing to tackle negative reporting about disabled people.
- The future of the British Council of Disabled People looked uncertain as members voiced concerns about the organisation's failure to be more inclusive and maintain a high profile.
- Thousands of disabled Holocaust victims were remembered as the world marked the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.
- A new United Nations convention on the rights of disabled people was delayed by reluctance from European countries to continue rapid progress, according to a UK representative leading efforts at a British Council seminar.



## FEBRUARY

- Campaigners raised concerns about the lack of dedicated funding to help deliver full independence for disabled people by 2025, as promised in the Prime Minister's strategy unit report *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, launched in January.
- Disabled people protested in Westminster in a bid to urge politicians to change the acts of care and treatment provisions set out in the Mental Capacity Bill. Campaigners argued that, under the bill, doctors and carers could have too much power over disabled people, who would have no legal right to challenge them.
- The Court of Appeal found that both airlines and airports were responsible for providing a free wheelchair service to disabled travellers in a landmark decision in the case of Ryanair and passenger Bob Ross.



## MARCH

- The latest Baywatch survey found that parking bay abuse was still rampant, with one in five bays being abused, two years on from the launch of the Baywatch campaign. Meanwhile, Blue Badge visitors to Westminster faced huge fines due to inadequate information about parking restrictions.
- The Legalise Cannabis Alliance supported our campaign to have cannabis legalised for medicinal use as it prepared candidates for the General Election.
- Campaigners raised concerns over a proposed two-tier benefits system, which would separate Incapacity Benefit claimants, paying less to those deemed fit to work but not seeking jobs.
- Maria Hutchings, the mother of a disabled child, challenged Tony Blair on TV over the policy of integrating severely disabled children into mainstream schools.



## APRIL

- The abortion of disabled fetuses hit the headlines again after campaigner Joanna Jepson tried and failed to have two doctors prosecuted for aborting a 28-week-old foetus.
- The Healthcare Commission was accused of failings in its handling of abuse allegations at Brotherton Villa, a long-stay hospital for people with learning difficulties, based at Fieldhead Hospital in Wakefield.
- A disabled film-maker Liz Crow was left to party on a pavement outside an awards ceremony as part of the Birds Eye View Film Festival celebrating diversity, specifically women in film, as the building was inaccessible.
- DN readers said goodbye to long-standing editor Mary Wilkinson, who stepped down after 22 years at the helm.



## MAY

- DN published its sex survey results, with 70 per cent of disabled people calling for the government to fund a specialist psycho-sexual counselling service. Nearly half of respondents also said they had never received sex education at school, and a small number called for prostitution to be legalised.
- The new Disability Discrimination Act 2005 was passed before parliament dissolved in the run up to the General Election. The new act will force public authorities to promote disability equality and promised to deliver a fully accessible rail and tube network by 2020. The Mental Capacity Act was also passed.
- Former and new staff at Greater London Action on Disability rowed over sackings and changes to the organisation.



## JUNE

- Reaction to the appointment of the first disabled work and pensions secretary, David Blunkett, was mixed, despite his assurances that no reform of Incapacity Benefit would take place without first consulting disabled people.
- Scottish MP Anne McGuire, who has diabetes, was appointed as the new minister for disabled people.
- A survey of disabled people found that many had faced voting difficulties in the General Election, with 66 per cent of polling stations found to be inaccessible.
- Sports stars and organisers hailed the success of the first ever Paralympic World Cup, which was held in Manchester. Attended by more than 350 athletes from 46 countries, the four-day competition was heralded as the largest showcase of disability sport after the Paralympics.



# ...in with the new

disabled is not about being an object of curiosity; it is, of course, about traversing rough jungle terrain! The David Attenborough-style narration made it feel like I was watching animals in the wild. As someone who has spent their life avoiding being labelled as inspirational, I struggle to understand why the disabled people on this programme were striving to be inspiring. The only thing their utterly pointless journey inspired me to do was switch over.

Most of the disabled people that I know would agree that the issues affecting our lives are things like housing, transport and care charges not scaling Latin American ravines. Maybe in 2006 we'll see documentaries that address our real issues?

\* For more views on television in 2005, read our columnist Jane Shepherd's opinion on page 42

## Douglas Campbell



So what will 2006 bring for disabled people and their families?

I hope it will be the year when we see the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 really being taken seriously.

I live in the modern town of Milton Keynes and there are still far too many shops and offices where even simple access barriers have not been removed.

In many older towns and cities I see whole rows of shops, bars and other businesses where they cannot even be bothered to provide a simple ramp to overcome a doorstep.

Will the steady decline in the retail trade and the move to Internet shopping make them realise in 2006 that they cannot afford to turn away people with

mobility impairments?

Will all businesses realise that a visually impaired person will return again and again to a shop that bothers to make the shopping experience a pleasure? Will they realise that the customer with a hearing impairment may book a dinner party for 50 friends if the restaurant manager takes the time to communicate with her? Let's hope so.

Late in 2006 we should see further implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, which will require most public bodies to make efforts to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equal opportunities for disabled people. I believe this could have huge implications with regard to outdoor access and street parking. How can your local council comply with this if they do not ensure that



disabled people can park where they need to go or if the town centre is pedestrianised with no provision for those with mobility impairments?

And on the motoring front, I am glad that 2006 will see Mobility Roadshows at both Edinburgh, between 5 and 6 April, and Swindon, between 8 and 10 June.

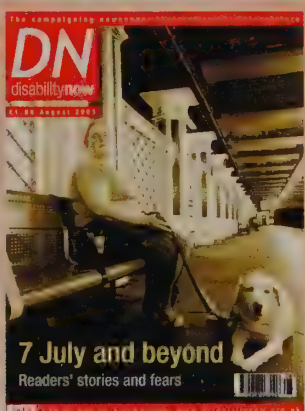
The British International Motor Show will be in London

for the first time in 30 years, between 20 and 30 July. Will it really get it right for disabled visitors this year? Will the manufacturers recognise that a large share of their market requires vehicles that can be used by disabled people and reflect this in what is on their stands? I have my doubts! Douglas Campbell is now an independent disability and charity consultant.



## JULY

- The Disability Rights Commission launched a discussion paper *Shaping the Future of Equality* to help ensure disability rights are not lost when it merges with other equality bodies into the Commission for Equality and Human Rights.
- A key figure in the inclusive education movement, Baroness Warnock, sparked debate after demanding a "radical review" of the inclusion policy she had worked to put in place. She also criticised the "wasteful and bureaucratic" statementing process.
- Disability Alliance announced its advice service on benefits for disabled people would close because of a lack of funding.
- A Scope survey found that 78 per cent of respondents thought it was acceptable for non-disabled actors to play the part of disabled people.



## AUGUST

- DN spoke to disabled people who were caught up without inadequate information during the London bombings. Transport for London called for feedback from readers on how to improve services in emergencies.
- Paralympic athletes and hopefuls welcomed the announcement of London's winning bid to host the 2012 games, despite the sombre mood following 7/7. Basketball star Ade Adepitan said the games would have a "massive impact" on London residents.
- A number of access problems cropped up at London's Live8 concert, stopping some disabled people from participating. Major problems included not having enough space on the designated platform for wheelchairs and no-one answering on the telephone access helplines.



## SEPTEMBER

- Debenhams became the first store to be sued under the DDA part 3 duties after wheelchair user Greg Jackson was stopped from browsing in the menswear section because of steps.
- A Leonard Cheshire survey revealed that some of the biggest hotel groups were failing to accommodate disabled people. The worst offender, Ramada Jarvis in Glasgow, told researchers: "We don't take people in wheelchairs."
- A DRC document *Whose Risk Is It Anyway?* called for an end to over-zealous health and safety risk assessments that were limiting disabled people's choices in life.
- The Court of Appeal overturned a previous ruling that gave Leslie Burke, who has cerebellar ataxia, and seriously ill patients, the right to stop doctors withdrawing artificial food and drink.



## OCTOBER

- Londoners and tourists welcomed the unveiling of Marc Quinn's sculpture, *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, in Trafalgar Square. Mayor Ken Livingstone called it "a piece about courage and beauty and defiance".
- On the tenth anniversary of the DDA, DN examined how effective the law had been and talked to experts about what the future holds for access.
- The DRC said a decision to ban a wheelchair user from donating blood because she could not lift herself onto a table was "bureaucracy and risk assessment gone mad".
- Furious campaigners baulked at a rule change stopping disabled people receiving Independent Living Fund payments while they appeal against their Disability Living Allowance being scrapped or reduced.



## NOVEMBER

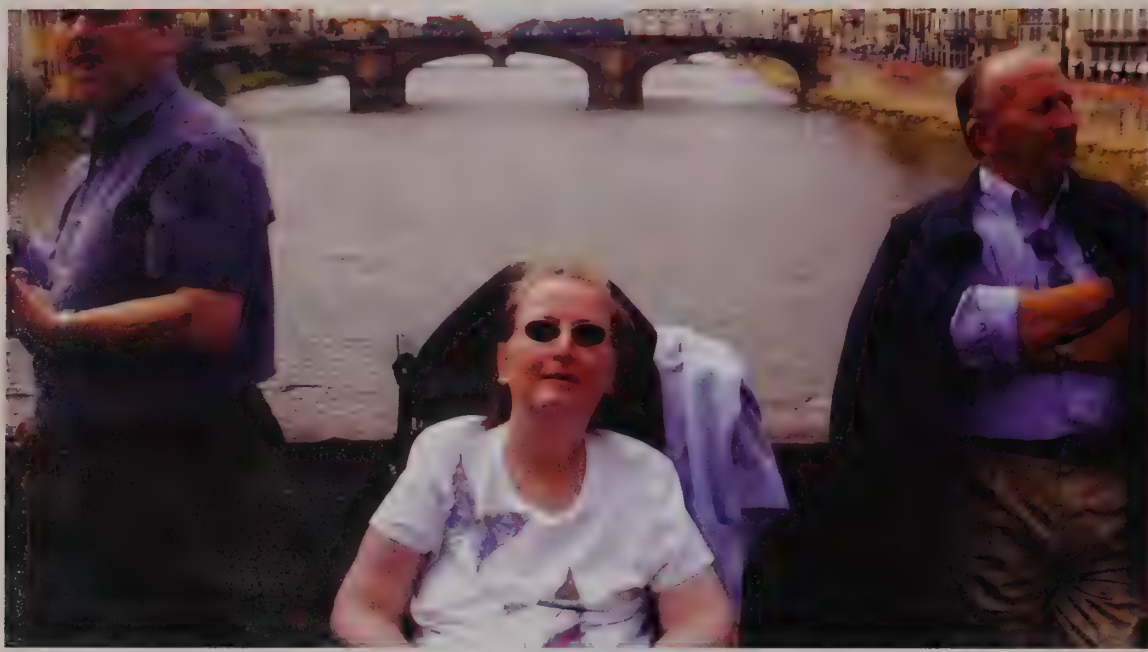
- The double whammy of steep fuel price increases and warnings of the coldest winter in years rekindled DN's campaign to extend winter fuel payments to severely disabled people under 60.
- The DRC demanded air travel be brought under the DDA following an incident when nine blind Ryanair passengers were ejected from the plane minutes before take-off because of a quota of four disabled passengers per flight.
- Paralympian Sarah Bailey broke her own world record for disabled cyclists in the women's 3,000m pursuit at the National Track Championships in Manchester, less than two months after joining the sport.
- DN caught up with the stars of *Beyond Boundaries*, the BBC reality TV show that followed the adventures of 11 disabled people trekking across the Nicaraguan jungle for 28 days.



## DECEMBER

- The minister for energy, Malcolm Wicks, called it a "scandal" that vulnerable people were dying from cold each winter. Campaigners said they hoped he would back the extension of winter fuel payments to severely disabled people under 60.
- The decision to allow the cannabis spray Sativex to be imported to the UK from Canada for people with multiple sclerosis threatened to spark a huge row over its availability to other disabled people.
- Disabled Gulf War veteran Daniel Martin won a war pension tribunal appeal after five years trying to establish the existence of Gulf War syndrome, in a ruling that could lead to compensation for 1,500 other veterans.
- Following David Blunkett's resignation, there were further delays to the reform of Incapacity Benefit.





Beauty spot: (from left) Gail on one of the bridges across the Arno; Pisa's leaning tower; Hotel San Giorgio



# Tower power in Italy

Historic Italy may not be the most obvious destination for the wheelchair-using tourist, but if you can cope with a few potholed roads, it's a surprisingly accessible choice, says Patrick Beacock

**M**y wife Gail had dreamed of visiting Florence for years. She loved the idea of touring the thriving Renaissance city, with its history and magnificent architecture, but although we've done a number of European trips, the fact we were taking a wheelchair added an extra challenge.

To this end, we did as much planning as we could before we left. We trawled the internet for a centrally located hotel with

accessible rooms (as opposed to hotels that said they merely had "disabled facilities"), and armed with a street map, we came up with the Hotel San Giorgio, a three-star hotel with an adapted room a few hundred yards from the Santa Maria Novella station.

The nearest airport to Florence serviced by a no-frills airline is Pisa. When we arrived, we bought two rail tickets to Florence (the cost of a taxi from Pisa to Florence is prohibitive and rail travel in Italy is both

cheap and wheelchair friendly). The accessible carriage was easy to get onto and en route the guard called ahead so that station staff in Florence were ready with a mobile lift for disembarking.

Our hotel was comfortable and friendly, even though it was a little cramped and had the occasional step. The bathroom was fairly spacious, with a level access shower.

Florence was wonderful. We managed to take in as many of

the sights as we could, including the Santa Maria Novella church, the Duomo, San Lorenzo market and square and the world-famous Uffizi Gallery. Although all the attractions were located nearby, we spent a great deal of time tackling the terrain – some of the streets were extremely bumpy, uneven and riddled with potholes, so Gail was "jiggled about" a fair bit.

Midway through the trip, we took the wheelchair accessible tourist bus and saw the Galleria Accademia (where Michelangelo's infamous statue of David is located), the Boboli Gardens and Pitti Palazza.

Because these sights are all a little further out, the buses were very useful, even though they were more infrequent than in many European cities.

In most of the tourist attractions, entry was free for both of us (as disabled person and carer), and we were usually escorted into a different entrance, away from the queues. Most attractions had a disabled loo and there were toilet facilities near most tourist information offices too.

On our final day, we checked out of the hotel and took the train to Pisa. We spent the afternoon in the nearby Piazza Miracoli, the area containing the Duomo, Battisterie and the famous leaning tower. All buildings except the tower and Battisterie were wheelchair accessible, and again, all were free for disabled people and helpers. After the trials and tribulations of the bumpy streets of Florence, the perfectly smooth Piazza Miracoli was a pleasure for both of us. Souvenirs and refreshments in Pisa were noticeably cheaper than in Florence too.

Our return trip wasn't nearly as hassle-free as the one out there. Our flight was delayed for many hours, then for some unknown reason the check-in staff took our boarding passes from us, changing our front seats for seats near the rear of the aircraft, claiming they were "special seats" for disabled passengers. The seats did not appear particularly "special", and staff at both the Italian and UK airports agreed with us that this merely made boarding and disembarking more difficult.

This didn't spoil our holiday though, which was, all in all, a very enjoyable if hectic break.



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disabilitynow January 2006



# A different way of holidaying

Canadian Denise Howse tries house-swapping; an affordable, fun and convenient alternative to booking through a travel agents

I first heard about house-swapping from a friend who had enjoyed a successful exchange with an Australian family. She found the experience an inexpensive and convenient way to travel and meet new people.

My husband Allan and I fancied visiting Europe, but I have multiple sclerosis so needed to find accessible houses. I searched the internet without much luck until I found the Homelink website, which matches house-swappers from around the globe.

On the website, I said I used a wheelchair but could walk with support for short distances. We narrowed our search down to two homes which seemed to meet most of my needs, one in Spain and one in France.

## Torreblanca, Spain

Our holiday started in Torreblanca on the Costa del Azahar. We flew to Barcelona and took a train to Torreblanca where we were met by our hosts, who drove us to their large summer home on the Mediterranean before leaving us on our own.

While most rooms were accessible, their home was completely tiled, which made it hard for me to navigate. There were also a lot of stairs to the bedrooms. Although I had told our house-swappers that I could manage a few stairs, my needs had obviously been "lost in translation" to some extent.

We had use of a car to get around, so we explored local medieval towns and took day trips to Tarragona, Peniscola, Villareal and Morella.

Peniscola was easy to get around, except for the hard push up to the castle. Generally in the ancient villages the kerbs were high and the streets cobbled, so wheelchair pushers must be strong – and you both need a good sense of humour.

The dry, mild climate of Spain, the slow pace of life and the magnificent scenery were exactly what the doctor ordered and we can't wait to go back.

## Antibes, France

Our second home was in Antibes on the French Riviera, to which we travelled by train. Again, we were picked up by



Blue heaven: The castle in Peniscola, Spain and (below) Denise

our hosts at the station before they drove us to their apartment.

For dinner we were cooked a home-made, five-course traditional French meal by our hostess while her husband explained the different dishes. The next morning we drove them to the airport so they could begin their own holiday – in our home.

Antibes is a small resort city with a large harbour and many boutiques, fine restaurants and hotels. The sea walk is wonderful for a stroll and is very accessible. The outdoor cafés are easy to wheel up to and there was nothing better than sitting in warm sunshine, sipping local wine, eating a beautiful meal and listening to jazz.

On warm days we put the top down on our convertible and headed for the hills. In a couple of hours we were in the mountains. We even made an overnight trip to Provence, where we stayed at a winery.

We loved France and will definitely be back, but for 2006 we're looking forward to



exploring new homes.

This will be made much easier by a new organisation, Matching Houses, which allows disabled people to swap homes with other disabled people. The concept is the same as Homeswap, but you're more likely to get a suitably adapted property. We hope to use the service this year to visit England and Italy.

- Matching Homes, tel: 01736 361 871, [www.matchinghouses.com](http://www.matchinghouses.com)
- Homelink, [www.homelink.org](http://www.homelink.org)
- The Howse's partially accessible home in Canada is a B&B when they're there and a potential house-swap when they're not. Tel: 00 11 604 886 2466, [www.howseshouse.com](http://www.howseshouse.com)

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# Life changed at Oasis

Mary Humphrey finds peace in Spain



In the swim of things: the pool at Oasis – complete with hoist

I am severely disabled and unable to get out, but two years ago my life changed when I discovered a fantastic holiday home in Spain – Oasis, located in a mountain village on the Costa Blanca called Finestrat. It was recommended by a disabled friend and I loved it so much I have been back four times.

Oasis is run by Diane Wingfield, an English lady, and her Spanish husband Migeul. They and their staff are very helpful, organised and professional.

The first time I went, I had never been away on my own and was scared. But the service was so good – Oasis even sent an escort to the UK, which still costs just £200 for the outward and return trip.

The holiday, which last time cost me £650 for the week, is all inclusive of food, drinks, trips out and my own "personal pusher".

Trips have included being taken swimming on the beach, visiting local villages, going for meals out and I have even been taken to the fairground where I had my first ever ride; it was wonderful.

The accommodation is also excellent. There is plenty of room for my wheelchair, the toilet and bathroom are spacious, and there is also a bed hoist. Nothing has been too much trouble; even the swimming pool has a hoist.

The owners are just putting the finishing touches to their new complex, which I have influenced by advising them on fittings so everything, from mirrors to switches, should now be accessible.

I was always nervous about going away but having been there and done it, I can't wait to go back again.

• Tel: 00 3496 587 8551, [oasiswingfield@ctv.es](mailto:oasiswingfield@ctv.es)

**I was always nervous about going away but having been there and done it, I can't wait to go back again.**



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[www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)



INTPL/David Levenson



# Ride of your life

Simon Webb joined a charity bike ride to explore the romantic island of Cuba

Cuba enjoys a unique place in the public imagination, but few people make the nine-hour flight to check it out, so when an opportunity came up to cycle across the country with a team of 40 strangers on a sponsored bike ride, I leapt at the chance. What better way was there to get to know a new country while also raising money for the charity Scope?

Our five-day trip saw us travel 300km route from Havana in the north to Trinidad in the south. We also had a day either side of the ride to relax and explore the island. I am totally blind so I was riding a tandem with my former rowing coach Gus.

We arrived in Cuba on the Saturday night to our first hitch: our bike hadn't been delivered – it was stranded in Madrid. So before we got in the saddle, we had to return to the airport to await the once-a-day flight from Spain. Here we learnt that Cubans do things at

their own speed and will not be hurried. Our bike finally arrived at 1am – just five hours before we were due to start the trip. This meant our first day's cycling was spent in a sunny haze, and I was falling asleep at the dinner table by the time we reached stopover point number one, the old port town of Mantanzas. Fortunately, tiredness did not stop me appreciating the wonderful taste of my first Mojito, the classic Cuban rum cocktail.

Travelling around the island on bikes is manageable most of the time, even though many roads are basic and some badly potholed. One stretch of road, known as the "Cuban motorway" bore little relation to its UK counterparts, other than its relative peace at 3am.

Despite the road's challenges, our tandem became a force to be reckoned with, and our two-man strength beat our more experienced team members.

As we rode inland from the coast, cycling became more



It takes two to tandem: Simon and Gus on the road (above) with scenes of rural Cuba (below)



difficult. Without the cooling breezes, the miles seemed to stretch on forever, so we stopped when we could to pick refreshing grapefruits. They tasted better than from any supermarket and we only stopped eating them when a farmer turned up with his gun.

We were warned to be "open-minded" about both food and accommodation but were pleasantly surprised. Food-wise, the menu consisted of fresh pasta, meat, fish, lentils, bread and fruit. Our lunches were less nice – we were eating leftovers from the night before. But when

you are tired, hungry and baking in the middle of nowhere, you are happy with pretty much anything.

Tourists are, not unreasonably, viewed as excellent moneymaking fodder. For example, the locals know that Cuban cigars are top class and sought after. As a consequence, they are sold in boxes of 25 with export taxes on them if you take home more than 23 – genius! I suggest hiding them in your dirty pants bag as you fly back home.

Getting hold of cigars in the first place was a challenge. In Trinidad, our guide had to take us down back streets until we reached a secluded house. In a back bedroom a man showed us boxes of cigars and then asked our guide to leave when it came to paying – all very secretive.

If you are looking for travels off the beaten track, Cuba is perfect. The country is stuck in a time warp where very little seems to change. Exploring it by bike is perfect too and I got so hooked on cycling that I have signed up for another trip with Scope.

Next summer, I will be cycling from Wembley to Berlin for the start of the 2006 world cup\* – a case of getting on my bike with an end goal in mind.

\* For more information, tel: 0800 0191 200, [www.scope.org.uk/adventures/worldcup.shtml](http://www.scope.org.uk/adventures/worldcup.shtml)



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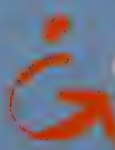


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# Home from home

There are a surprising number of accessible caravan sites around Britain. One of Angie Gardiner's favourites is in North Devon

I have enjoyed caravanning for over 50 years now, firstly with my parents, sister and brother, more recently with my husband and two sons. I used to love the feeling of freedom owning a caravan gives you – you could literally “hook up and go”. I still love that part of it, although our holidays need slightly more thought now as our younger son Richard has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.

Three years ago, when Richard was 17, I became so frustrated with the lack of accessible facilities on caravan sites that I decided to do some research and was amazed to find that there were hundreds of caravan sites in the UK with good facilities – it was just a case of finding them. So I took the bull by the horns and set up my own website listing sites with accessible facilities. The site was, and still is, a very steep learning curve, but I hope it is useful for others.

We have caravanned with our sons all over the UK and Europe. Finding sites that combine great access with a wonderful location can be hard, but one of our favourites is the Damage Barton caravan site at Morthoe, near Woolacombe, North Devon.

The site is on a working farm run by three generations of the Lethbridge family.

We were not the typical caravanning family. Aside from Richard being a wheelchair user, we were with friends

**‘Finding sites that combine great access with a wonderful location can be hard’**

whose daughter, Rosie, has Down's syndrome. Richard needs good bathroom facilities and easy access to the essential parts of the site, but Rosie has an eating disorder and eats about 20 yoghurts a day. These

yoghurts are a special type that are hard to come by so it was essential we had storage space for two weeks' worth – that's a lot of fridge space!

The Lethbridge family were wonderful and could not have been more helpful – every fridge on the farm was full of yoghurts. Every day one of the family came to see us to ensure we had everything we needed, as well as giving us endless advice on accessible places to visit.

Woolacombe beach was hard for us to get onto as it is very soft, has a stream that crosses it and gets very, very busy. However, we were delighted to discover that at the far end, at Putsborough, we were able to drive right down to the beach, drop all our possessions off and have acres of sand all to ourselves. Bliss!

We had wonderful weather for our holiday. We loved the area, found walks that we could manage, had fantastic food cooked by my husband



Caravanning through the years: The Gardiners at Damage Barton and (below) when Richard was younger

and drank far too much wine. All this and the site's facilities, including the disabled loo, were always spotlessly clean. What more could you ask for?

Our holiday proved to me that caravanning with disabled people is not only possible but in many ways ideal. It just takes a little more time to plan and research where you go.

It is so much easier to have everything you need with you in the caravan. We would never go back to hotel and self-catering holidays, as you are



never quite sure that the facilities provided will meet your requirements until you arrive, and by then it is too late.

● *Angie's website is at:* [www.caravanable.co.uk](http://www.caravanable.co.uk)  
● *Damage Barton Caravan Site,* tel: 01271 870 502, [www.damagebarton.co.uk](http://www.damagebarton.co.uk)

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# The king of the road

The Nirvana motorhome means you never have to worry about finding a hotel that will suit your needs again. John Killick reports

Last spring, Nirvana Motorhomes took possession of the first custom-built accessible motorhome from CPT Italy. In September, my wife Roma and I were given the van for a three-day road-test at the Kent Camping and Caravan show.

The first thing that strikes you about the motorhome is its size. Roma took one look and christened it "the monster".

The huge door on the right side opens to give access to a swing-out hoist and a platform for wheelchair access. Inside, the deck is made of polished maple and looks great, although when wet it could get slippery. It is equipped with a very well designed shower, toilet and wash-basin, two double beds and a two-burner hob, which doubles as a drainer for the sink.

On the road, the vehicle handles surprisingly well. The steering is light and the Fiat Multipla-type gears are very

easy to use. Even someone with limited arm strength would be able to drive it without much trouble.

The only problems I came across related to its size. On roundabouts you need to take extra care of the long overhang at the back and there is a blind spot about halfway back. I was initially worried about reversing, but the Nirvana has a really nifty reversing camera fitted that solves all these kinds of problems.

As a living space, the Nirvana is comfortable. There is plenty of room to spin a wheelchair and the sleeping accommodation is comfy. The only thing that feels cramped is the rather basic kitchen.

The final plus is the cost. Many disabled motorhome owners choose to adapt their own vehicles. Given that a reasonable spec vehicle costs in the region of £34,000 and conversions can add a further £30,000, the Nirvana, which



Monster drive: Roma outside the Nirvana motorhome

comes fully fitted for £33,000, could save you money – although additional modifications, such as monkey hoists, will cost more.

We enjoyed our three days with the Nirvana. For those who face the perennial problem of finding somewhere to holiday that is prepared to accept a disabled child or younger adult, a motorhome offers an excellent, if costly,

potential solution. And if you're still wary of the idea, you don't have to take my word for it – Nirvana are only too happy to bring the van to you for a demonstration or hire it out to give interested families a taste of what it has to offer.

• Nirvana, tel: 01634 242 442, [www.nirvanarv.com](http://www.nirvanarv.com)

John Killick is honorary secretary of the Disabled Motorists Federation

## Misled by advert

Reader Jeff Jones sounds a note of caution on booking accessible holidays

Like many disabled people, our disposable income is limited, so last May we were pleased to see an offer of 50 per cent discounts from British Haven Holidays in an advert in another disability publication.

My son Richard has spina bifida and I have arthritis so we chose a ten-foot unadapted caravan with an external ramp. With the discount this should have cost £283 for a week in Burnham on Sea. However, by the time we finished the booking process, the cost had escalated to £500 and we were made to have a fully adapted van.

We ended up booking on the Haven Holidays website without mentioning access, which cost £400. I then phoned up and asked for a ramped unit – which they honoured as I'd already paid. Since then, new customers with access requirements have had to go through a "special needs" advisor.

Our experience taught us to be wary of advertising.

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Cyprus holiday apartment for rent. Fully furnished, 3 bedroom apartment in Oroklini. Sleeps 6. Located 7 kms east of Larwaca. Pool on site. 20 mins beach. Wheelchair friendly. Call Alan or Sandra on 01264 324574 for details.

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# Insuring a top trip

Insurance companies treat disabled customers notoriously badly, but there are a number of steps you can take to make sure you're covered – before and during your trip away. Philip Baron reports

**W**hen you're in the travel agents booking your dream trip away, the last thing on your mind will be cancelling it, but if you have a disability – particularly one that means your health varies over time – it's something you need to think about, because if you haven't got the right insurance cover then you risk losing not only your holiday, but money you have paid too.

The expectation, of course, is that you'll only need to phone your insurers if things go wrong on holiday – if your baggage is stolen or you become ill. But what happens if are unable to go away because of illness that occurs before you leave?

Your own insurance cover can be affected by the health of people you're going away with or dependents at home. The medical declaration you sign when buying a policy normally embraces not only your own health, but also that of travel companions and "any person not travelling on whose health the booking or

continuation of the trip may depend". This means that even if a partner who isn't coming on holiday with you has a condition meaning you have to cancel your holiday, you could be left high and dry without reimbursement.

Another stumbling point can be insurance renewal. People with an annual policy often take several holidays a year and book them months in advance, never thinking about whether they will still be covered if they later become ill and have to cancel their trip. Each year's insurance is a new contract and customers must tell their insurer of any changes in their health since the policy started or was last renewed.

Doing this can, however, have bad consequences. Take the case of one man, whose insurance policy came up for renewal in March. In January last year he booked a trip to South Africa, but before he was due to go in December, he became ill with angina. When his insurance firm sent renewal documents, he revealed his change in health.

JENNIFER ROWLAND



Turkish delight: But if you have to cancel a holiday you could lose out if you're not insured properly

The company responded by adding an exclusion clause to his new policy saying it would not cover claims arising from angina, throwing his whole plans into disarray.

The man felt obliged to cancel the holiday – at his own expense. He complained to the Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS), which ruled that while the insurance company was entitled to impose an exclusion clause for a particular condition, it was unfair to offer no cover for a holiday already booked. The firm was told it should have given the man an opportunity to cancel the holiday and claim under the expiring policy. It was also told to pay back the cancellation

costs. There are two lessons from his case; firstly, if you feel you've been cheated by a company, do challenge them using the FOS. Secondly, don't assume that your policy will stay the same if your physical

**'If you haven't got the right insurance cover then you risk losing not only your holiday, but money you have paid too'**

condition changes.

Fortunately, most travel insurance claims are more straightforward. You should have few problems with claims for theft, for example, as long as you report the crime to the

local police and get a note confirming you have done so. There are also a number of key rules to follow when booking insurance and making claims:

- Always shop around for the best deal. Discounts may be available for couples and families, but be aware that travel agents and tour operators rarely offer the best value insurance, although their deals without age limits may be good for older people. Specialist providers like Saga are also often good value for older people. Many travel insurers decline to insure older people or scare them away with high premiums. Some don't though, like Marks and Spencer (up to

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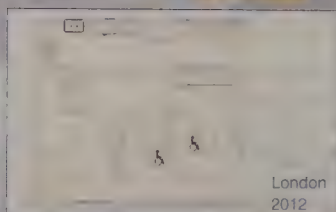
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age 70), Help the Aged and Age Concern Insurance Services (no upper limit).

- When comparing prices, always check the excess charge, which you will have to pay in the event of a claim. Also check your household contents policy to see whether it covers personal possessions – including equipment like wheelchairs – away from home. If so, you might get a reduction on your travel insurance. That said, more expensive items, like scooters, may fall outside the remit of regular contents insurance and may require a specialist provider.
- Read the small print of insurance policies and remember you normally have 14 days to cancel if you discover exclusions you are not happy about.
- If you do have medical concerns, try specialist companies like CH Travelcare or Free Spirit, which assess each case individually.
- You should be aware that Form E111, which used to give some free medical care in European Union countries, is no more. It is being superseded next year by the European Health Insurance Card, but do not rely on this. Its cover is limited and it will not get you home in an emergency.
- As well as getting the right insurance, you should take steps to ensure you can get compensation if your holiday company fails to provide a good service. It is a good idea

to book package holidays with established tour operators, preferably members of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) or the Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO). If you do so, your money can be refunded in the event of a member firm going out of business.

- Try to pay for your holiday by credit card so you can then claim compensation from the card-issuing company, although some travel firms charge a fee for such card payments. If you have problems with your hotel, raise complaints with the tour operator's representative, if there is one, and bring back video or photo evidence. It also helps to have the home addresses of others affected.

## CONTACTS

### CH Travelcare

Tel: 0870 750 6711,  
www.ch-facilities.co.uk

### Free Spirit

Tel: 0845 230 5000,  
www.free-spirit.com

### Nationwide Building Society

Tel: 0500 30 20 16,  
www.nationwide.co.uk

### Financial Ombudsman Service

Tel: 020 7964 1000,  
www.financial-

ombudsman.org.uk

### Association of British Travel Agents

Tel: 020 7637 2444,  
www.abta.co.uk

### Association of Independent Tour Operators

Tel: 020 8744 9280,  
www.aito.co.uk

## Policies for an adult under 65 years (single trip)

Insurer	2 weeks, Europe	2 weeks, worldwide (exc USA*)	Contacts
Direct Travel Insurance	£11.00	£24.00	Tel: 0845 605 2500, www.direct-travel.co.uk
Churchill	£16.73	£29.39	Tel: 0800 032 7140, www.churchill.com
Flexicover Direct (silver policy)	£18.00	£30.00	Tel: 0870 990 9292, www.flexicover.com
Marks and Spencer	£21.23	£37.60 (inc. USA)	Tel: 0800 068 3918, www.marksandspencer.com

\* Expect to pay 10-20 per cent more for USA destinations

## Policies for older travellers

Insurer	Age Band	2 weeks, Europe	2 weeks, worldwide (exc USA)	Contacts
Help the Aged	(60-64) (65-69) (70-74) (75-79) (80+)*	£33.85 £38.10 £42.83 £48.32 £54.22	£80.91 £91.71 £101.40 £114.36 £128.29	Tel: 0800 41 31 80, www.helptheaged.org.uk/ ShoppingServices/Insurance/ Travel/_default.htm
Age Concern **	(55-64) (65-69) (70-74) (75-79) (80+)*	£38.30 £41.40 £47.10 £49.50 £55.30	£65.80 £88.50 £99.10 £111.50 £122.40	Tel: 0845 601 2234, www.ageconcern.org.uk/ AgeConcern/products_4153.htm
Churchill	(66-70) (71-80) (81-90) (91-99)	£20.19 £32.63 £44.01 £50.20	£36.74 £57.32 £77.31 £88.18	Tel: 0800 032 7140, www.churchill.com
Marks and Spencer	65+*	£42.46	£75.20	Tel: 0800 068 3918, www.marksandspencer.com

\* No upper limit. \*\* Age Concern have higher rates for Spain, Andorra, Balearics and Canary Islands. They insure accompanied children free

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### Rural Andalucia, Spain

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### Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages

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# Handy carriers

The days of lugging heavy suitcases around are gone, says Judy Graham. As a scooter user on holiday, she lists her favourite trolley cases, which come in a wide variety of designs and prices

## VALUE FOR MONEY

**What?** Three-piece set, Revelation, by Antler luggage. This set, in black and grey, has a large, medium and small suitcase, each with a retractable handle. The cases are fully lined, with a large front-zip pocket and have interlocking zip pullers with a padlock for extra security. The beauty is that each conveniently fits into the larger suitcase to save space and at less than £100, you really do get three suitcases for the price of one.

**How much?** £79.99.

**Where?** Argos, catalogue number 0753515, tel: 0870 600 8784, [www.argos.co.uk](http://www.argos.co.uk)



## BAGS OF ROOM

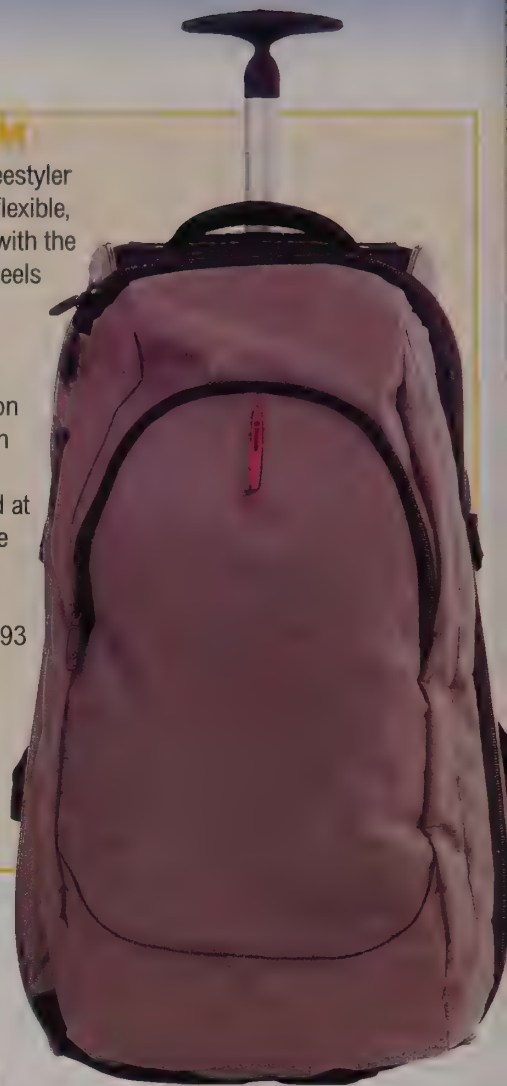
**What?** The Samsonite Freestyler duffle bag combines the flexible, squashy quality of a bag with the convenience of sturdy wheels and a retractable handle.

The bag has two carry straps with Velcro safety grip, a large zipped section and a front zipped section with pen compartment.

The handle is activated at the touch of a button. The colour is dune, it weighs 3.9kg, measures 75cm x 40cm x 36cm and holds 93 litres.

**How much?** £89

**Where?** John Lewis, product code 74464307, tel: 0845 604 9049, [www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)



## SUPRICE KITBAG

**What?** Tesco Navy Trolley Holdall.

This affordable item has all the features of a large capacity holdall with the benefits of a trolley suitcase. Made of polyester, it has two front zippered pockets and a telescopic handle. It measures

70cm x 36cm x 36 cm.

**How much?** £19.99.

**Where?** Tesco Extra, tel: 0870 607 6060, [www.tesco.com](http://www.tesco.com)



## LIGHT AND BRIGHT

**What?** For something that will stand out on an airport carousel, try this stylish set of trolley suitcases in pink or silver. They are light, have a strong polycarbon shell, a fully lined interior, one main zip and a push button carry handle.

**How much?** £109 for a set of large, medium and a carry-on suitcase.

**Where?** Great Universal, tel: 0800 0922 622, [www.greatuniversal.com](http://www.greatuniversal.com)



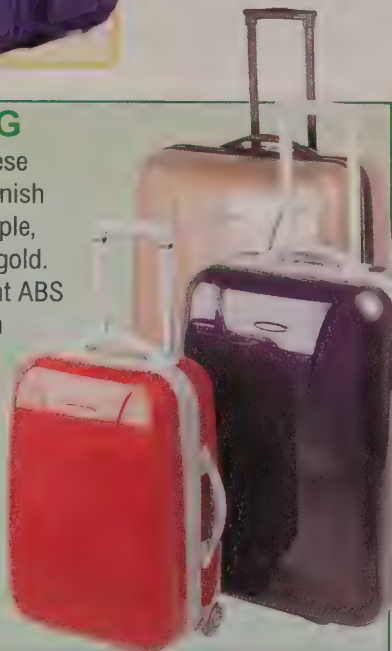
## STYLISH AND STRONG

**What?** Eminent Mirror Luggage. These suitcases have a distinctive mirror finish and come in stunning colours – purple, pink, aqua, crimson, blueberry and gold. They are made from extra lightweight ABS – the same stuff used to make crash helmets – so they are sturdy, long-lasting and easy to manoeuvre. The cases come in three sizes.

The large one weighs 5.7kg, the medium 4.7 kg and the small 3.3kg.

**How much?** £75 for large, £65 for medium and £55 for small.

**Where?** Trueshopping, tel: 01282 418 029, [www.trueshopping.co.uk](http://www.trueshopping.co.uk)

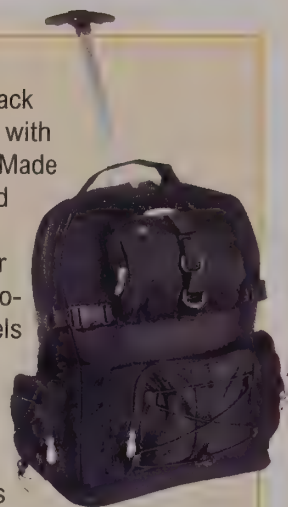


## FLEXIBLE FEATURES

**What?** This Travelon Dive Trolley Backpack combines the practicality of a backpack with the convenience of a wheeled suitcase. Made from polyester, it is both lightweight and durable. If you want to carry it on your back, it has padded, adjustable shoulder straps. If not, it has a retractable, easy-to-use push button handle. The skate wheels have mud flaps. There are two side and two front zippered pockets and the main compartment has a dual zippered closure that can be padlocked. Available in black, blue, or red, the case measures 44cm x 37cm x 20cm and can hold 33 litres.

**How much?** £24

**Where?** Ebags, tel: 00 800 3456 4846, [www.ebags.co.uk](http://www.ebags.co.uk)



## KIDS' CARRIERS

**What?** Let your kids lighten the load with a funky frog case.

The Trippy Wheelie Suitcase Green Frog catches the eye with its bright green print. It measures 56cm x 33cm x 16cm, weighs 2.6kg and holds 22 litres. The range also has trolley duffle, backpack, mini holdall and messenger bags and if your daughters prefer pink, there is a butterfly pattern perfect for them.

**How much?** £25

**Where?** Tripps, tel: 0845 345 6085, [www.tripp.co.uk](http://www.tripp.co.uk)



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Work commenced in October on the final stages of the project with the big barn being transformed into two large 'units' – **The Dresser** (sleeps 8) and **The Drier** (sleeps 8). The Old Workshop is now being transformed into two single storey units – **The Little Workshop** (sleeps 4) and **The Big Workshop** (sleeps 6).

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As bookings are brisk for 2006 – don't miss your dates – take a look at [www.norfolkdisabled-friendlycottages.co.uk](http://www.norfolkdisabled-friendlycottages.co.uk) or telephone: **01485 578603**

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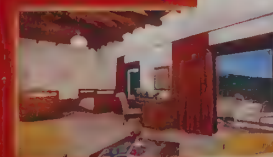


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# In control

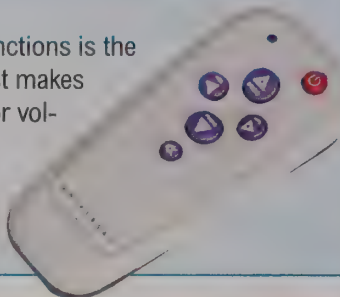
Technology provides many choices for TV viewing. There are terrestrial channels, digital and satellite networks and the options to record programmes and watch films on a video or DVD player. But with versatility comes complexity as more controls appear, often with smaller buttons. Lucy Andrews highlights the best devices for you.

## KEEP IT SIMPLE

**What?** An extremely simple remote handset for controlling basic TV functions is the Philips Universal (SBCRU151). It can be programmed for use with most makes of TV and has just six buttons – a red on/off, four blue arrow buttons for volume and channel changing and a smaller blue mute button.

**How much?** £4.99

**Where?** Argos, tel: 0870 600 8784, [www.argos.co.uk](http://www.argos.co.uk), and other electrical retailers.



## VIDEO VOICE

**What?** The Talking Video Remote Control is for videos only. It is a black handset with well-spaced, bright yellow buttons to control functions such as time, record and channel select. When the buttons are pressed the function is spoken. The device can record a concurrent programme on a different channel or can be pre-set by selecting the start time and period you want to record. The device includes a talking clock. You should check the compatibility of your video before buying this control.

**How much?** £59.95, or supplied with a video recorder for £99.

**Where?** Cobolt Systems, tel: 01493 700 172, [www.cobolt.co.uk](http://www.cobolt.co.uk)

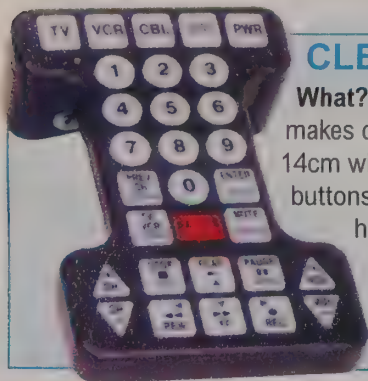
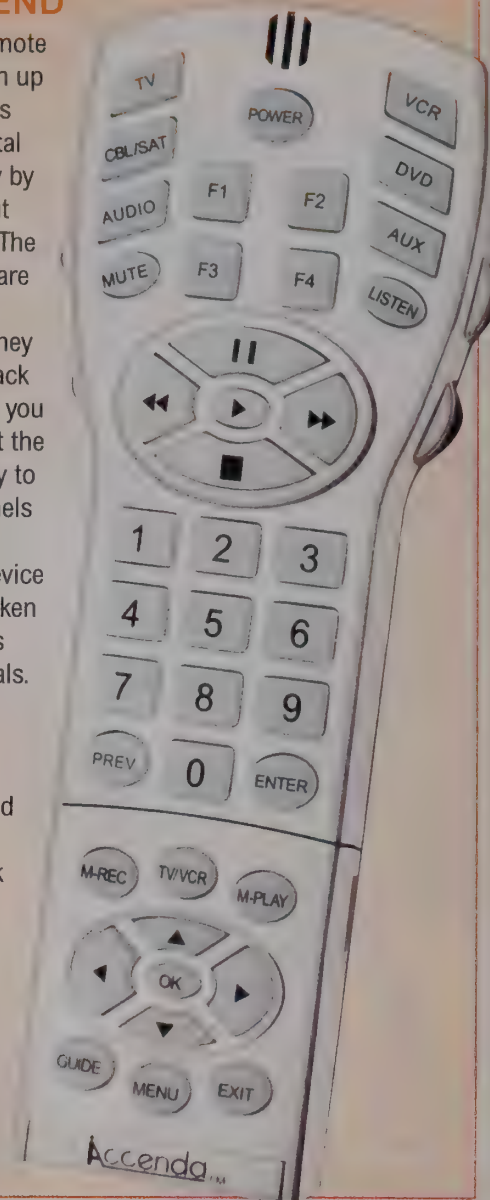


## FLEXIBLE FRIEND

**What?** The Accenda Remote Control can be used with up to six compatible devices including cable and digital receivers, conventionally by pressing the buttons, but can also be hands-free. The buttons on the handset are distinctive and lit from behind. When pressed they can provide voice feedback telling you which button you have pressed. Buttons at the side provide an easy way to move through the channels and alter volume. In hands-free mode, the device recognises up to 50 spoken commands and converts them into infra-red signals. A docking station for recharging the unit provides a convenient holder for when it is used hands-free. The device has an integral notebook to record up to nine seconds of speech, which is useful if you need to take note of a telephone number read out on TV, for example.

**How much?** £79.99

**Where?** VoiceZapper, [www.voicezapper.co.uk](http://www.voicezapper.co.uk)



## CLEAR CONTROL

**What?** The Adaptation Universal TV Remote is a large button controller that can be used with the well-known makes of TV, video and DVD players. It can also be programmed to work with some digital or satellite receivers. At 14cm wide and 22cm long, it is larger than a standard remote and is shaped so that, when placed on a table, the buttons are easier to see. The buttons themselves are large and touch sensitive and are clearly marked. The device has the option of six external switches to control on/off, volume level, channel and mute for people who cannot manage the standard buttons.

**How much?** £40 or £98 for the extra switch version. It is available for a trial period for £7.

**Where?** QED, tel: 0870 787 8850, [www.qedltd.com](http://www.qedltd.com)



## ARMCHAIR ANSWER

**What?** An armchair tidy, which that drapes over the arm of your sofa, is the perfect way to keep TV remotes to hand. A fabric one is available from Scotts of Stow, or a leather one with a deeper pocket is available from Past Times.

**How much?** Fabric £11.95, leather £30

**Where?** Scotts of Stow, tel: 0870 600 4444, [www.scottsofstow.co.uk](http://www.scottsofstow.co.uk) or Past Times, tel: 0870 120 1939, [www.past-times.com](http://www.past-times.com)

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Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). If you have a question on equipment for Lucy please email [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk) or post it to the usual address.

The DLF helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, and provides information and advice on choosing and using equipment. Contact the helpline on 0845 130 9177 or email [advice@dlf.org.uk](mailto:advice@dlf.org.uk)



# The snow's on the road...

...but there are a number of steps you can take to ensure your vehicle and passengers stay as safe as possible. Helen Smith offers her top tips for tackling sleet, ice and fog



If the forecasters are to be believed, we are set for one of the worst winters in decades. Bad weather increases the likelihood of accidents, but more often the real cause is someone driving inappropriately for the conditions.

As temperatures drop below zero, drivers need to adjust their driving to suit the more treacherous conditions. According to experts, the three most important things to remember when driving in the winter are to stay alert, slow down and stay in control.

The weather affects how far you can see and how your vehicle performs – fog and mist, ice, heavy rain, snow, sleet and low sun all make driving trickier. So what can you do to make your driving safer? In a nutshell, be prepared.

## BEFORE YOU DRIVE

- Do not wait until the bad weather comes before checking your vehicle is safe. Make sure it is well maintained and serviced in advance. Keep your lights, windows and mirrors clean and free from ice and snow.
- Keep your battery charged.
- Add anti-freeze to the radiator and winter additive to your windscreen washer bottles.
- Make sure wipers and lights are in good working order
- Check that tyres have plenty of tread depth and are at the correct pressure.

## BE PREPARED

- Before setting out on your journey check the weather forecasts.

[www.bbc.co.uk/travelnews](http://www.bbc.co.uk/travelnews) is

a good place to start. If you're not online, check ceefax or local radio.

- Tell someone at your destination what time you expect to arrive.

## PACK FOR THE COLD

Keep a winter survival kit in your vehicle. Essential supplies can provide comfort and safety if you become stranded. Recommended items include:

- A spade, for snowy conditions
- Ice scraper and de-icer
- Tow rope or chains
- Warning triangle – sold at Halfords, £9.99, tel: 0870 870 8810, [www.halfords.com](http://www.halfords.com)
- Torch and batteries
- First aid kit and blanket
- Extra clothing and footwear
- Non-perishable energy foods such as chocolate and water

## BREAKING DOWN

If you break down, get stuck or stranded, don't panic. Stay with your vehicle for safety and warmth and wait for help.

On a motorway, it is best to use a roadside emergency telephone because breakdown and emergency services will be able to locate you easily. If you have to use a mobile phone, track your location from the marker post numbers on the side of the hard shoulder.

Carry the number of your roadside assistance company at all times.

If you have to leave your vehicle to get help, make sure other drivers can see you.

## ON THE ROAD

The key to safe winter car journeys is adjusting your driving to the conditions

- Hail, heavy snow and rain reduce visibility, so use dipped headlights and reduce your speed.
- It can take as much as ten times longer to stop in icy conditions than on a dry road, so if it is icy drive slowly, allowing extra room to slow down and stop.
- Use the highest gear possible to avoid wheel spin.
- Manoeuvre gently on icy or snowy roads, avoiding harsh braking and acceleration. To brake without locking your wheels, move into a low gear earlier than usual, allow your speed to fall and use the brake pedal gently.
- If you start to skid, ease off the accelerator – but do not brake suddenly.
- Watch out for fog – it drifts rapidly and is often patchy. In foggy conditions, drive very slowly, using dipped headlights. Use fog-lights if visibility is seriously reduced, but remember to switch them off when visibility improves. Don't speed up suddenly when it looks like the fog is



Cold outlook: Adjusting your driving to the conditions is key

clearing – you can find yourself back in the thick of it very quickly.

- Do not attempt to cross flooded roads if the water seems too deep. If you do decide to cross, drive slowly in first gear, keeping the engine speed high by slipping the clutch - this will stop you from stalling.
- Remember to test your brakes when you are through the flood before you drive at normal speed.

## CONTACTS

- Tips from the Department for Transport winter driving website: [www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/winterdriving.htm](http://www.thinkroadsafety.gov.uk/advice/winterdriving.htm)
- AA Emergency Breakdown, tel: 0800 88 77 66
- RAC Emergency Breakdown, tel: 0800 82 82 82
- For more on breakdown services, see DNonline's motoring archive at [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)



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# Dear Rachel

- love and loneliness
- bereavement
- personal problems
- advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)



## OT's bad advice

I have multiple sclerosis and use a scooter indoors and outside. A year ago, on the advice of an occupational therapist (OT), I had a shower installed with non-slip flooring. It looked wonderful, but has proved to be completely unsuitable. Whenever I use it the rest of the bathroom – including my scooter – gets soaked. I cannot wash properly using the shower seat fixed to the wall and the floor is also impossible to clean using domestic cleaners.

I have asked three OTs how I should tackle the problem and none have come up with a solution, other than to suggest using a free-standing seat and a shower screen, for which I would need assistance. The bath and bath lift I used previously worked perfectly well.  
Shirley, London

Social services have a responsibility to find a bathing solution for you that works in practice as well as in theory

and the situation you describe is unsatisfactory. However good the floor is, if it requires industrial cleaning to be properly maintained, it does not meet your needs.

You need to go back to your OT (preferably the one who recommended this shower in the first place) and either ask that they re-configure the shower and toilet so that your scooter and toilet do not get drenched when you wash, or ask them to replace the shower with a bath and lift.

If they have provided you with a solution that leaves you worse off than you were originally, then they are not meeting their obligations.

If you feel you need support in taking this issue up with social services, contact either DIAL, or your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau. They will be listed in the telephone book.

- **DIAL**, tel: 01303 312 123, [www.dialuk.org.uk](http://www.dialuk.org.uk)
- **Citizen's Advice**, tel: 020 7833 2181, [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

## Mum is struggling

My friend is a single mum to three young children with various disabilities, including ADHD and cerebral palsy. She doesn't have the equipment or the support she needs, although she always puts a brave face on things. Apart from trips to the hospital, she never gets out and things are getting her down. I am worried about her. How can I help her?  
Caroline, by email

I can understand your concern for your friend – her situation sounds desperate. I think the first priority should be for her to contact social services to get the equipment she needs and – more importantly – to ask about respite care for herself. It sounds as if she needs much more support than she is currently getting and perhaps a break from her caring responsibilities. Carers UK can help her with respite care for her children.

If she is reluctant to ask for help, and given the stress she is under, it may make things

## College blues

My daughter is 46 and has been attending college for the last eight years on various courses. When she tried to enrol again last September, she was told that as she has now passed all the exams on the courses, she can no longer enrol. Social services have suggested she go to a day centre instead, but my daughter needs to be active and doesn't want to go there.  
Jane, West Yorkshire

I understand your daughter's desire to remain active. It is wrong that she should be denied access to college simply because she has completed the courses that are deemed appropriate for her. She has the same right to attend college as anyone else, for academic or leisure courses, although she may need to be supported to enable that to happen.

I suggest you contact social services and ask specifically about your daughter being supported in her right to go to college. If they are prepared to fund a day centre place for her, I see no reason why they cannot use those same resources to support her in college, where she will be happier.

easier if someone supports her in contacting social services. This could either be a friend, or an independent organisation. The CP helpline can also offer her advice and support.

- **Carers UK**, tel: 0207 490 8818, [www.acecarers.org.uk](http://www.acecarers.org.uk)
- **CP Helpline**, tel: 0808 800 3333, email: [cphelpline@scope.org.uk](mailto:cphelpline@scope.org.uk)

## No flat progress

I bought my own home when I was non-disabled but have since been diagnosed with Ehlers-Danlos syndrome. Because my mobility is deteriorating, I now need a ground-floor flat. Despite strong support from my rheumatologist, I have been on the housing list for over a year and there still seems to be no prospect of getting a flat. I have even offered to sell my house to the council to

speed things up, but no one is listening to me.

Name supplied, by email

Local authority housing lists usually operate a points system to assess urgency of need, and a letter from your consultant supporting your need for ground floor accommodation should help your case. While you are not homeless, you do have a housing need, borne out of circumstances over which you have no control.

In principle, your suggestion that you sell your property to the local authority seems a sensible one. I suggest you contact the Disability Law Service, who can advise you further. Also try the Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome Support Group, which can give you more specific advice and may be able to suggest alternative housing options, such as an application to a housing association.

- **Ehlers-Danlos Support Group**, tel: 01252 690940, [www.ehlers-danlos.org](http://www.ehlers-danlos.org)
- **Disability Law Service**, tel: 020 7791 9800, minicom: 020 7791 9801, [www.dls.org.uk](http://www.dls.org.uk)

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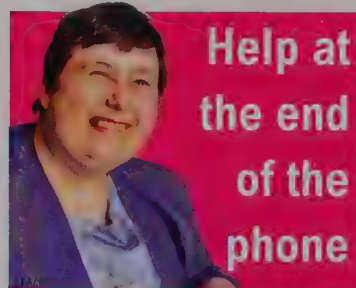
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DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psychotherapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.



## ASK THE READERS

My disabled friend uses respite care regularly. The care centre organises trips but because he has done some of them before, he doesn't always want to go on them. The manager says they don't have enough staff to let him stay at the centre and that he must go out with them. Surely he should have some choice? Daz, by email

### A right to stay put

Your friend has a right not to go on trips arranged by the respite care centre – respite care offers no break for him if he is simply bored.

I would suggest two things. First, your friend should explain to the centre, either individually or through an advocate (including a friend), that he has a right not to be forced to go on trips and ask that the centre looks at their staffing and includes staying at the centre as an option. If the care is organised through an agency, like social services, I would also suggest your friend asks to vary the location of respite care if possible to avoid it becoming so monotonous.

• *Advocacy Resource Exchange*, tel: 0208 880 4545, [www.advocacyresource.net](http://www.advocacyresource.net)  
Rachel Wilson

### New respite centre

Nobody should be forced to do something they do not want to do – care homes are for caring, not for forced internment. Get your friend to contact social services and ask if



they can go to a new respite centre. If that does not work, ask for an appointment to see your local MP at one of his or her surgeries. robn, DN web forums

### Ask for a report

Ask for a current inspection report of the home from social services. They should have copies of reports from both arranged and unannounced inspections.

These should be asked for by anyone thinking of a respite or residential care home. The reports give excellent insights. Gillian, DN web forums

### Talk to care manager

I've just come out of a care home myself. If I wasn't happy with something or the

way I was treated, I would phone social services and tell my care manager what was bothering me. He would then tell the care home.

Erica, DN web forums

### NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

I have a disabled parking bay outside my house allocated by the council. The problem is that other disabled people keep using it, so I can rarely park near my home. The council says it can do nothing and I am too afraid to challenge people myself. What can I do?

Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask the readers" at the usual postal address or by email at: [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)

## SIMON SAYS

### Meeting can be hard

Simon Parritt heads up DN's new problems section, addressing readers' relationship issues. He is a chartered counselling psychologist with an interest in sexuality and relationships. He is also an honorary senior lecturer at the Institute of Sexuality and Human Relationships in London and was director of the Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD) before it closed due to funding cuts.

He launches this new problem section by addressing a letter sent to DN from a disabled woman in Leicester who says there is little information available about relationships and disability and she finds it difficult to meet people. There are few meeting places for disabled people, she says, particularly outside of London.

**Simon says:** "There are few meeting places, although attempts have been made to set up clubs over the years. Apart from the issues around finding accessible and affordable venues, the problem is that few women join and the men who do can be overly sexually focused and have poor social skills.

"But perhaps we should ask what is it that we really want? Do disabled people really have different agendas or needs in dating and relationships? Do disabled men face different issues from disabled women? Perhaps we all face a lack of opportunity, or is it that we are excluded by our non-disabled peers who are more adventurous, even reckless some might say, in their sexual and relationship behaviour before settling into a relationship?"

"The DN sex survey (May 2005) did not look specifically at personal problems, but this column will – aiming to give answers to individual worries – so tell us what the real issues are for you when it comes to sex, dating and long-term relationships. Are we as disabled people too conservative in our relationships, which was something indicated through the survey results? Write in and share your thoughts, problems and experiences."

Send your relationship questions to "Simon says" at the usual postal address or by email at: [editor@disabilitynow.org.uk](mailto:editor@disabilitynow.org.uk)

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TV

## Review of the year

Just as mainstream telly has its themes – house/garden/total body and even car makeovers – here in Disability Land we've had a slew of programmes about obesity, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and that old favourite... giving the home secretary a right good kicking.

If David Blunkett was concerned earlier in the year about being lampooned on BBC2's *Dead Ringers*, then it was nothing to the lumps that were taken out of him (and his reputation) by More4's biting satirical drama *A Very Social Secretary* (right) just prior to his resignation as works and pensions secretary.

Channel 4's *House of Obsessive Compulsives* was a fly-on-the-wall series in which cameras followed the every move of three people with OCD whilst they were incarcerated in an OCD enclave for two weeks' group therapy to enable them to live a more "normal" life. "Normal" for one woman meant not being speechless with terror because of a speck of glitter. The disabling nature of the condition was explored and slowly the participants began to see gradual improvements which enabled them to contemplate rejoining society as a whole.

More recently ITV1's *The*



Top TV: Channel 4's series *House of Obsessive Compulsives*



*Man Who Loved The Number 12* illustrated graphically how someone with a 40-year history of OCD can, with the right treatment, recover.

Elsewhere, others had more weighty subjects on their minds. Channel 4's *Supersize Kids* was a shocking exposé of the appalling diets consumed by many young people, further highlighted brilliantly by *Jamie's School Dinners* (also

Channel 4), which went to the trouble of demonstrating to the kids exactly what goes into a turkey twizzler (you don't want to know...).

Just as worrying, but even harder to watch, was the obesity brought on by Prader-Willi Syndrome in BBC's *Not My Fault I'm Fat*. This rare condition means that because of a dodgy hypothalamus you just never feel full – ever.

Then of course there were all the scare stories on our news bulletins, which warned that if we have a Body Mass Index of over 30, then certain NHS trusts would not touch us with a barge pole, let alone consider surgery on our morbidly obese bodies.

In that case I wouldn't get so much as a paracetamol out of them.

Have a good 2006.

Jane Shepherd

Film



## Disability Film Festival

The opening gala of London Disability Art Forum's (LDAF) seventh Disability Film Festival at the National Film Theatre was a slice of Bollywood. *Dance* is a kind of Hindi Billy Elliott with amputations, with something for everyone in true Bollywood style: sentiment, tacky dancing, evil villain, kung fu and an uplifting ending. General public opinion was an approving (if politically incorrect), "It was bonkers!"

Sharon Snyder's *Disability Takes on the Arts* provided an engrossing US view of disability arts – the kind of film that's so packed with information one wants to be able to keep stopping it to take notes.

Andy Kimpton-Nye's *Derek Jarman: Life As Art* offered an insightful account of the life of the great artist/film-maker, though at times I would have appreciated a little more explanation in the narrative.

Victoria Lucas presented George Cukor's extraordinary 1941 melodrama *A Woman's Face*, in which a woman embittered by facial scarring turns to crime until plastic surgery gives her the opportunity of a new life. Joan Crawford stars, but is out-acted by the great German

movie actor Conrad Veidt.

A major find for me was *Spit It Out* (below), an autobiographical film by Jonathan Skurnik exploring the issues he had faced as someone who stutters, delving into his difficult family background and looking at the self-help movement of stutterers in the US. I found it informative about an under-appreciated impairment and often very moving.



The jewel of the festival was Liz Crow's *Nectar*. An old deaf man looks back to his youth when, in 1931, a successful swimmer, he had to choose between training for the Olympics, admired by a hearing world of which he was not fully part, or choosing a deaf life of his own. The attention to detail is remarkable for a low-budget film, even down to the use of period sign language. It also continues Crow's attempts to explore ways of integrating access into film, including on-screen sign interpretation and an audio-description track. Given that this is Crow's first full live-action film, it is an exceptional achievement.

Allan Sutherland



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## What's on



## Film

*Dokfa nai meuman* (Mysterious Object at Noon) will be screening at Tate Modern on 18 January. The film from Thailand tells the story of the relationship between a disabled boy and his young female teacher. • £4. Tel: 020 7887 8888, [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

## Theatre

Roald Dahl's *The Twits* will be at the Octagon theatre in Bolton until 14 January. There will be a BSL-interpreted performance on 6 January and an audio described performance on 10 January. • From £7. Tel: 01204 520 661, [www.octagonbolton.co.uk](http://www.octagonbolton.co.uk)

Pirandello's play *As You Desire Me* will be at The Playhouse in London to 22 January. Kristin Scott Thomas plays L'Ignota, a cabaret singer with amnesia. • From £17.50. Tel: 0870 060 6631, [www.theambassadors.com](http://www.theambassadors.com)



*Tom's Midnight Garden* (above) is playing the new Unicorn children's theatre in London to 29 January. There will be integrated sign language-interpreted performances on 12 and 14 January, featuring interpreter/actor Russell Aldersson. • From £6.50. Tel: 08700 534 534, [www.unicorntheatre.com](http://www.unicorntheatre.com)

Oily Cart theatre company is touring with *If All the World Were Paper* until 18 February. The show explores sounds, textures and sights that can be

conjured up using only paper and ink. Aimed at two to five year-olds with accompanying workshops.

• Tel: 020 8672 6329, [www.oilycart.org.uk](http://www.oilycart.org.uk)

## Exhibitions

BlindArt promotes visually impaired artists to showcase their work at competitions and exhibitions, increasing the representation of visually impaired people in the arts.

• Tel: 020 7245 9977, [www.blindart.net](http://www.blindart.net)

The Victoria and Albert museum has regular events for disabled visitors. There will be an audio-described Chinese New Year celebration on 29 January, including performances of folk dance and kung fu for visually impaired visitors and people with learning difficulties.

• Free, but booking essential. Tel: 020 7942 2211, [minicom: 02079422002](http://minicom:02079422002), [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)  
Full What's on at [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)



## Publications

**Contact a Family** publishes a range of booklets including those on growing up, sex and relationships and education for young disabled people. Tel: 020 7608 8700, [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

**Pavilion** publishes training resources about mental health, including learning difficulties and epilepsy. Tel: 0870 890 1080, [www.pavpub.com](http://www.pavpub.com)

The **Department of Health**, the **NHS Appointments Commission** and the **NHS Confederation** have published an equality and human rights guide, targeted at NHS boards, which has details of legislation and statistical information on communities, patients and the workforce. The guide will be updated every six months. Tel: 020 7210 4850, [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

**Mencap** has published *They Won't Believe Me*, an advice booklet for parents and staff who work with children with learning difficulties, aimed at reducing bullying. Tel: 0808 808 1111. To download a copy, see [www.mencap.org.uk/download/they\\_wont\\_believe\\_me.pdf](http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/they_wont_believe_me.pdf)

**The Dog Rose Trust**, which researches and develops interpretation and information for people with sensory impairments, has produced a CD giving information on Ellesmere,

including its history and attractions. Tel: 01584 874 567, [www.dogrose-trust.org.uk](http://www.dogrose-trust.org.uk), and listen to their radio station at [www.dogrosesound.org](http://www.dogrosesound.org)

Disability access consultancy **Configure** has produced an accessibility pack for exhibitors at shows, including equality training, stand accessibility, a portable induction loop and Braille and tactile signage. See [www.configure.co.uk](http://www.configure.co.uk)

*999 and Other Working Dogs* by **Verite Reily Collins** tells canine tales of assistance dogs, including how they are trained and the kind of work they do. £18.99. Tel: 020 7351 9936, [www.where2c.com/999WD](http://www.where2c.com/999WD)

*Novel Ideas* by **Jeff Thorburn** contains anecdotes from celebrities on what their favourite books are and why. All proceeds go to the Alzheimers Society. £4.99. Apex Publishing, PO Box 7086, Clacton on Sea, Essex, CO15 5WN, [www.apexpublishing.co.uk](http://www.apexpublishing.co.uk)

**Marianna Csofi**, who has ME, has written a number of books including *Overcoming Loneliness and Making Friends* (£7.99, [www.bookstohelppeople.co.uk](http://www.bookstohelppeople.co.uk)) and *People Skills for Young Adults*, which is aimed at people with learning difficulties (£15.95, Jessica Kingsley Publishers). Jessica

Kingsley publishes a range of titles dealing with mental health, including autistic spectrum disorders. Tel: 020 7833 2307, [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)

**The Joseph Rowntree Foundation** has published *The education and employment of disabled young people: Frustrated ambition*, by Tania Burchardt, which explores how young disabled people are frustrated by barriers in education systems that mean they often do not achieve the levels of education and employment that they want. £9.95. Tel: 01235 465 500. A summary of the findings and the report can be downloaded at [www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk)

**The Young ME Sufferers Trust** has produced guidelines for educational psychologists aimed at helping them make assessments of the educational needs of children with ME. The guidelines include disability discrimination law, a family case study and a questionnaire. Tel: 01245 401 080, [www.tymestrust.org/tymepublications.htm](http://www.tymestrust.org/tymepublications.htm) and [www.tymestrust.org/pdfs/edpsychguide.pdf](http://www.tymestrust.org/pdfs/edpsychguide.pdf)

**Chailey Heritage Clinical Services** have published good practice guidelines for health and support staff working

with children and young people with physical disabilities. The guidelines include behaviour management and the National Service Framework

for children. £10. Tel: 01825 722 112, or write to: Chailey Heritage Clinical Services, Beggars Wood Road, North Chailey, Nr Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 4JN.

## What's on

**The Special Needs Fringe 2006** will be held at Hilton Olympia in London from 11-13 January, and will include speakers, an exhibition including communication aids and computer access devices and prizes from Inclusive Technology. Tel: 01457 819 790, [www.inclusive.co.uk/exhibitions](http://www.inclusive.co.uk/exhibitions)

There will be a conference titled **Child Participation 2006: Improving Services to Change Lives** at the Cavendish Conference Centre in London on 19 January, in association with NCH, Scope and Children's Express. The event will focus on improving services for children, including services for disabled children, and will include speakers and discussions. Tel: 020 7324 4330, register online at: [www.neilstewartassociates.com/kd134](http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/kd134)

## Sports

There's no excuse not to get fit in the New Year with a range of leisure opportunities around the UK.

**Cullys** fitness centre in Hockley, Essex, has accessible facilities, including adaptable equipment and a guide dog room. There are reduced membership rates for disabled people. Tel: 01702 208 771, [www.cullys.co.uk](http://www.cullys.co.uk)

**Optua Leisure** runs Big Splash swimming sessions for disabled people around the Suffolk area. If you are interested in taking part or volunteering, tel: 01449 770 154, email: [leisure@optua.org.uk](mailto:leisure@optua.org.uk) or see [www.optua.org.uk](http://www.optua.org.uk)

**Essex Free Access National Sportspeople (FANS)** is an initiative providing support to talented sportspeople competing at national levels in their sport, including disabled people, enabling them to develop through free access to facilities and training partners where applicable. To find out more, tel: 01245 436 282, [www.essexcc.gov.uk](http://www.essexcc.gov.uk)  
For information on disability sports clubs in Essex, tel: 01245 606 978, or see [www.chelmsfordbc.gov.uk/sportsdevelopment](http://www.chelmsfordbc.gov.uk/sportsdevelopment)

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Websites

**The NSPCC** has a website enabling children to talk about abuse, bullying and relationship difficulties. There are audio tracks and BSL interpretations of each page through video clips. See [www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk](http://www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk), [www.talktillitstops.org.uk](http://www.talktillitstops.org.uk), [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**The Disabled Workers Co-operative** has launched an eJobs portal aimed at helping disabled people find employment. Employers and agencies can register jobs for free. See [www.disabledworkers.org.uk/careers](http://www.disabledworkers.org.uk/careers)

**The BBC**, in association with AbilityNet, has launched My Web, My Way, to help disabled people get the most out of the Internet. See [www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility](http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility)

**The Langstone Society**, which provides services and support to people with learning difficulties, has launched a website by and for people with learning difficulties. See [www.langstonesociety.org](http://www.langstonesociety.org)

**C & K Training** has launched a website giving information on training and courses, in association with advice agencies, schools, colleges and universities. See [www.cktraining.co.uk](http://www.cktraining.co.uk)

Wanted

Nominations are invited for the **London Sports Awards 2006**. The awards honour disabled people who have made outstanding achievements in their sport, and also recognise teams, clubs, coaches and schools. **Deadline: 13 January.** Tel: 020 7354 8666, [www.londonsportsforum.org.uk/awards.html](http://www.londonsportsforum.org.uk/awards.html)

**The College of Occupational Therapists and Stannah Stairlifts** are inviting nominations for Occupational Therapist of the Year 2006. Prizes include £1000. **Deadline: 20 February 2006.** Tel: 020 7861 2424, [www.stannah.com](http://www.stannah.com), or tel: 020 7357 6480, [www.cot.org.uk](http://www.cot.org.uk)

**The Sheila McKechnie Foundation** promotes and supports campaigning in the charity sector. Nominations for the Sheila McKechnie awards are invited, with categories including health and social care and social inclusion. **Deadline: 26 January 2006.** Tel: 020 7770 7822, email: [awards@sheilamckechnie.org.uk](mailto:awards@sheilamckechnie.org.uk), [www.sheilamckechnie.org.uk](http://www.sheilamckechnie.org.uk)

**The Institute of Highways and Transportation** is inviting nominations for a series of awards for 2006, including an accessibility award, which recognises improvements in accessible transport services. **Deadline 16 January 2006.** Tel: 020 7391 9976, [www.awards.ihf.org](http://www.awards.ihf.org)

Services

**Brent Council** has a SignVideo interpreter service for BSL users, enabling them to talk to the council from three locations in Brent. See [www.brent.gov.uk](http://www.brent.gov.uk)

**Family info Link** provides information, advice and support on childcare, services and support for children, young people and their families, and has a range of publications. Tel (freephone): 0808 800 0606, [www.familyinfo.co.uk](http://www.familyinfo.co.uk)

**The QEF Mobility Centre** in Carshalton, Surrey, provides mobility information, demonstrations, assessments and training for disabled and elderly people. Tel: 020 8770 1151, email: [info@mobility-qe.org](mailto:info@mobility-qe.org)

Courses

**The National Autistic Society (NAS)** runs Prospects, an employment and training service for people with autism and Asperger's syndrome. Prospects has launched a new project called Step into Work, in the Yorkshire region. Tel: 0114 267 6210, or email: [prospects-leeds@nas.org.uk](mailto:prospects-leeds@nas.org.uk), [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk)

**The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)** runs a range of training courses. New courses for 2006 include occupational therapy, law and good practice and a training the trainers workshop. See [www.dlf.org.uk/training](http://www.dlf.org.uk/training)

**Pecan** runs a computer centre for deaf and hearing impaired people. Tutors are on hand to help you gain computer skills and search for and find employment. Tel: 020 7732 0007, minicom: 020 7740 9209, email: [deaf.ict@pecan.org.uk](mailto:deaf.ict@pecan.org.uk), [www.pecan.org.uk](http://www.pecan.org.uk)

**www.disabilitynow.org.uk**

Have a look at our website for the latest news, features, campaign updates, sports and arts. There are also sections on motoring, travel and equipment. Get involved in our forums and Have Your Say. Check out the For Sale section for used wheelchairs, scooters and cars – many pictured – and our extensive online holiday directory, again with pictures. You can also find a penpal, register for our monthly email newsletter and enter exclusive online competitions. See [www.disabilitynow.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynow.org.uk)



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### • Cars/vans/caravan

**MERCEDES VITO 108 D** Traveliner 2.3 1998 S reg, diesel. 45k miles, green, twin sunroofs, carries 4 people plus wheelchair, tax and MOT expires August 06. Cotrim adapted lowered floor with ramp, rear lowering pneumatic suspension. Main dealer serviced, good condition, one owner from new, £5,500 ono. Tel evenings: 01273 270044 (Brighton).

**NISSAN VANETTE VERSA** 2.3 diesel, R reg, 4 seats plus wheelchair, ramp with electric winch (Widnes Car conversion). 44k miles, MOT expires Feb 06, fsh, sunroof, pas. £3,600 ono. Tel: 01539 561491 (Cumbria).

**FORD FOCUS 1.6** Zetec, 3 door, auto, air con with passenger seat electric wheelchair (Constables conversion). I owner from new (Nov 01), MOT/tax expires Nov 06. 20k miles, original seat and fittings for eventual reinstatement. £6,000 for car, chair and fittings. Tel: 01737 243538 (Reigate, Surrey).

**VW LT35 LWB** 21 ft Motorhome 2.5 Tdi, 6k miles (2004), only one owner. Pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, air con, reversing sensors, category 1 alarm (Phantom system). Front passenger's seat vacant for wheelchair, 2 berth with 3 rear seats converting into sizable double bed. Ratcliffe tail-gate rear lift for wheelchair user access, overhead hoist for wheelchair transference from wheelchair to bed, Easi-lock system for front passenger. Microwave, fridge, hob, sink, cassette, toilet, blown air heating, inverter and full electric power system. Hardly used. In excellent condition, £33,000 ono. Tel: 0114 257 0723.

**FIAT MULTIPLA 100** 16V ELX, red, Brotherwood wheelchair conversion in front, rear ramp with inertia belts. 4k miles, 2004, only one owner from new. E/windows, pas, excellent steering, light to manoeuvre. Hardly been used, £17,500 ono. Tel Mon to Fri, 9 'til 5: 01695 424200 (Nr Ormskirk, Lancs).

**VW CARAVELLE 2.4** auto, metallic green. Petrol. R reg (1997) 40k miles. Fsh Electric side lift. Fixings for one wheelchair, could carry 2. Driver plus 2 passengers. 10 months' tax and MOT. £4,750. Tel: 01622 791454 (Maidstone) or e-mail [philmaison.61910@virgin.net](mailto:philmaison.61910@virgin.net)

**FIAT FIORINO 1.7** TD, R reg (1998), 18k miles, carries 4 including wheelchair and driver. MOT expires April 06. Only 2 owners from new, fsh, in excellent condition, £2,300. Tel: 01832 734810 (Northants).

**ELAP ROTATING CAR** seat, double sliding complete seat. Fits Ford Escort or can be modernised to fit any other car. Never been used, cost £630, asking £300 ono. Tel: 01246 238362 (Chesterfield).

**VOLKSWAGEN CARAVELLE 2.4** diesel, M reg, 58k miles, e/windows, pas, 5-8 seats, rear electric wheelchair lift. New MOT, fsh, £4,950 ono. Tel: 01243 585342 (W Sussex).

**NISSAN PRAIRIE 2.0SLX**, K reg (1992), 82k miles, full year's MOT, 6 months' tax, pas, e/windows. Full Brotherwood conversion with hi-roof, transverse seat for front passenger. £3,250 ono. Tel: 07718 366347 (Sevenoaks).

**CHAIRMAN PEUGEOT EXPERT** 1.9 diesel, silver, W reg, 82K miles with Gowrings conversion. Rear ramp with inertia belts. Full Service History. Taxed and full MOT. Only one owner from new. £6, 000. Tel: 02392 792186 (Waterlooville).

**1997 R REG** Renault Extra Prima van 1.9 diesel. Light aluminium easy to use ramp, 3 seats plus wheelchair, wheelchair clamps. All with seat belts. 50K miles. Mor until March 2006. Tax until Dec 2005. Alarm. Price £2850. Tel: 01268 751812.

**RENAULT TRAFIC 2.1** diesel, 1995, 75k miles, pas, RICON wheelchair lift at rear. Seats 6 including wheelchair, year's MOT. 2 owners from new, £2,500 ono. Tel: 01379 783328 (Suffolk).

**108 CDI MERCEDES** Vito 2.2 diesel, reg date 11.2.04. low mileage, 8900 miles. Lowered floor, easy folding ramp, 4 passenger seats, fully adapted for wheelchair, tinted windows, immaculate condition! Cost £21,750, looking for offers around £14, 750. Tel: 01324 716810.

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**CHAIRMAN FORD ESCORT** 55 1.3, R reg (1998), MOT expires July 06. Taxed. 49k miles. Wheelchair conversion incl lowering floor and hinged ramp with full inertia belts. Full service history. Good runner, £2,190 ono. Tel: 07785 311666 or evenings: 01753 653411 (Sunbury).

**MERCEDES V220 CDI**, X reg (2001), 52k miles, only 2 owners with main dealer's fsh. Air con, pas, e/windows, CD player. 6/7 seater (4/5 seater with 2 wheelchairs) with Jubilee conversion incl ramp side access. RAC 5 star warranty, MOT 'til June 06, 30 years Mercedes warranty. In very good condition, £9,540 ovno. Tel: 01787 280424 (Sudbury, Suffolk) or mobile: 07929 384358 or email: [seadonkat@aol.com](mailto:seadonkat@aol.com)

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Cont'd pg 49

### • Recruitment (on page 45 to 50)



Kids is a national charity working with disabled children, young people and their families. We deliver a wide range of services, including leisure and advocacy projects with young people, and provide training and advice to promote inclusive play and leisure.

### A NATIONAL VOICE FOR DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR INCLUSION IN RECREATION AND LEISURE

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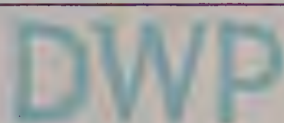
As the Head of this three-year project, you will need extensive management experience, including managing projects and large budgets, backed with a clear understanding of inclusion and commitment to the social model of disability. A strong leader, you will have excellent communication skills and an energetic attitude. You will know about relevant policy and legislation and, preferably, have experience of working with young people or in the disability/inclusion sector. London based, you will be required to travel throughout England.

**Salary: £31,300** including London weighting. This is a full time post.

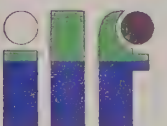
**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS: Midday, 9 January 2006**  
**Assessment and Interviews will be held in London w/c 16 January 2006**  
To receive full details and an application pack please email: [yp-in@kids.org.uk](mailto:yp-in@kids.org.uk) or send a large SAE to: YP-in, Kids, 6 Aztec Row, Berners Road, London N1 0PW (please state preferred format) quoting Ref. no. YP01/06.

Kids strives to be an equal opportunities employer. All disabled people who meet the person specification will be offered an interview.

### • Public appointments (cont'd pg 50)



Department for  
Work and Pensions



## INDEPENDENT LIVING FUNDS

*"help disabled people with high support needs lead independent lives in the community"*

The Independent Living Funds are two discretionary Trusts, wholly funded by Government, which provide financial help towards personal assistance costs for people with high support needs to enable them to live independently in their own homes. The funds are governed by a Board of Trustees, appointed by the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who decide on policy matters within the terms of the Funds' Trust Deeds. We are looking to recruit one person as a trustee for the existing trusts, which currently operate under two separate trust deeds.

The Funds work in partnership with Local Authorities' Social Services Departments in Great Britain and with Health & Social Services Boards and Trusts in Northern Ireland and have a customer caseload of about 19,500 and an annual budget of £231million. Day-to-day administration is the responsibility of the Chief Executive who, with the Funds' staff of 168, is based in Nottingham. The Funds also engage 82 Assessors based throughout the country who work for the Funds on a self-employed basis to assess clients' care needs.

#### The Role:

The ideal candidate will have:

- a legal, social care, public or voluntary sector background.
- excellent communication skills and business knowledge
- a good knowledge of current issues on disability
- experience in dealing with high profile and publicly sensitive issues
- a general understanding of government processes and corporate governance
- experience of board and committee work

#### Being a Trustee Requires:

- The Trustee role is an unpaid volunteer position. However all reasonable expenses incurred whilst carrying out the role are payable.
- You will be expected to attend meetings up to 2 days a month in London with periodic visits to Nottingham.

For further information and an application form please call 01772 238206, or write to Mick Allen, Department for Work and Pensions, Room 1009, Palatine House, Lancaster Rd, Preston PR1 1HB, or e-mail [Mick.Allen@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Mick.Allen@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)  
Application packs are available in Braille, large print and audio tape.

**Closing date for receipt of applications is 26 January 2006.**

*The Independent Living Funds wants to further improve the diversity of appointments to ensure that it understands and meets the needs of the customers, now and in the future. Therefore, we welcome applications from suitably experienced individuals irrespective of gender, disability, age, race, religion, civil status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or community background.*





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53 Renault Kangoo 1.6 auto  
53 Vauxhall Agila 1.2 Liberty  
03 Mercedes Benz Vaneo 1.6  
51 Suzuki Wagon R Liberty 1.3  
X Volkswagen Diesel Transporter  
51 Volkswagen Transporter D -  
03 Mercedes Vaneo Auto -  
51 Nissan Vannette 2.3D Verso  
53 Toyota Powerbus -  
53 Mercedes Vaneo -  
54 Fiat Doblo Hi Roof -  
choice Vauxhall Agilas -  
X- 04 Renault Kangoo -  
03 Mercedes Benz Vaneo -  
X Toyota Powervan GL  
T Daihatsu Hijet 1.3 16v -  
02 Mercedes Benz V Class  
S VW Sharan 2.0 auto  
P Fiat Fiorino 1.4

Lowered floor, 4 seats, 15k, luxury accessible MPV  
Drive from wheelchair, leather trim, 20k  
Liberty, lowered floor, ramp & 7 seats  
Lowered floor, A/C, ramp, 16k  
Lowered floor, fold out ramp  
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**RENAULT KANGOO 1.4 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 25/07/2002, White, 3 seats, As new condition, Automatic, 2,250 miles, MOT until: 28/07/2006, 5 door, A.B.S, Air Bag, Electric reels, Forward view front window for wheelchair occupant, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Immaculate condition inside and out, Non-Slip Flooring, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Full length factory fitted Sunroof, Twin Side Doors. **£9,250**

**FIAT DOBLO ASPEN 1.3 MULTIJET TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 16/06/2005, Steel grey, 4 seats, 1 owner, As new condition, 5 speed manual, 4,000 miles, MOT until: 16/06/2008, GM Aspen conversion, ABS brakes, 5 door, Balance of manufactures Warranty, Electric reels, Electric windows, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Immaculate condition inside and out, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Non-Slip Flooring, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking. **£10,995**

**FIAT FIORINO 1.7 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 25/08/2005, Red, 4 seats, 2 owners, Fair Condition, Manual, 46,000 miles, MOT until: 21/02/2006, 3 Door, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Large area side windows, Non-Slip Flooring, Radio/cassette player. **£1,850**

**RENAULT MASTER SWB 2.2 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 15/08/2001, Blue, 5 seats, Manual, 18,000 miles, Air Bag, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Side load door, Twin front passenger seat. **£10,700**

**PEUGEOT BOXER SWB 2.0 HDI** Date first registered: 24/05/2003, White, 7 seats, Manual, 21,000 miles, Air Bag, Could take 2 wheelchairs, 9 seater W/C access, Power Steering, Side load door, Twin front passenger seat. **£11,950**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER SWB 2.5 TDI TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 06/08/2001, Red, 5 seats, 24,000 miles, Automatic Transmission, Full width lightweight ramp, Hand controls, Electric park brake, Swivel base drivers seats, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Side load door, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£11,500**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER SWB 2.5 TDI TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 25/11/1998, Green, 4 seats, 42,000 miles, Automatic Transmission, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Electric Winch, Lowering rear air suspension, Power Steering, Rear Saloon Heater, Side load door, Single front passenger seat, Two rear saloon passenger seats. **£6,800**

**VOLKSWAGEN TRANSPORTER T4 1.9 LTR TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 27/03/2000, Blue, 4 seats, Manual, 27,000 miles, RICON CLEARWAY electric wheelchair lift, Short wheelbase, Single front passenger seat, Could take 2 wheelchairs, Power Steering. **£9,995**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.6 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 14/11/2003, Green, 3 seats, 13,000 miles, 5 door, A.B.S, Air Bag, Automatic Transmission, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking, Electric Mirrors, Electric windows, Alloy wheels. **£11,300**

**RENAULT MASTER SWB 2.2 DCI TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 01/08/2002, Blue, 5 seats, 5 speed manual, 15,000 miles, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player CD multichanger, Remote Central Locking, RICON CLEARWAY electric wheelchair lift. **£11,950**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.4 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 23/04/2002, Red, 5 speed manual, 7,500 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Remote Central Locking. **£9,150**

**FIAT SCUDO COMBI 2.0 LTR JTD TURBO DIESEL** Date first registered: 06/03/2003, Blue, 3 seats, Manual, 8,600 miles, 5 door, Air conditioning, Electric Mirrors, Electric reels, Electric windows, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking, Single front passenger seat. **£12,350**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.5 LTR DIESEL** Date first registered: 05/03/2003, Red, 3 seat, Manual, 17,000 miles, 5 door, Air Bag, Electric reels, Lowered rear floor for wheelchair access, Power Steering, Radio/cassette player, Remote Central Locking. **£9,700**

**RENAULT KANGOO 1.2 LTR PETROL** Date first registered: 19/09/2002, Red, 3 seats, Manual, 17,000 miles, 5 door, Electric reels, Electric Winch, Full Width Lightweight Ramp, One rear saloon seat, Power Steering. **£8,995**

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Various Mini-Buses and Wheelchair access in stock  
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• Recruitment (on page 45 to 50)

# IF YOU WEREN'T JUDGED ON YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS, WHAT WOULD YOU THINK?

## Chief Executive, Equality Challenge Unit

Salary in the range £90,000 – £100,000  
including performance related element

Too often it's background that counts, not achievements. Universities and colleges have recognised this and are committed to achieving change. So there's an opportunity for someone with excellent leadership and influencing skills to help bring about that change and transform the lives of staff and students.

Newly reconstituted as a limited company after a successful first five years, the Equality Challenge Unit is responsible for supporting work to improve and promote equality and diversity throughout higher education. Leadership of the Unit is a task that requires a keen strategic mind, plenty of vision, and the ability to work with a wide range of stakeholders.

Your success depends on inspiring confidence in a variety of institutions and people. You'll have strategic-level experience of working with, or within, the higher education sector - plus a track record of promoting equality and diversity within organisations. This gives you the credibility and influence to persuade other leading figures in higher education and support institutions to make change.

It's a high-profile role and your impact could change the course of people's lives. If you have the drive and strategic expertise we're looking for, please visit [www.ecu.ac.uk/ce](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/ce) For a confidential discussion please ring Imogen Wilde, Director, Norman Broadbent, tel: 020 7484 0091 or 07850 236406, to whom applications should be returned by 16 December 2005.



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**LDAF**  
London Disability Arts Forum



## London Disability Arts Forum Artistic Director

£28,003 pro rata 3 days per week - £16,802

**LDAF is looking for an exceptional Artistic Director with excellent management and people skills. This post is only open to disabled people.**

**Application deadline: 3 January 2006.**

**LDAF, 20-22 Waterson St, London E2 8HE.**

**Tel: 020 7739 1133**

**vicky@ldaf.org www.ldaf.org**



**Knee-Bo!** The universal plinth to help overcome some of the challenges of visiting the bathroom. Whether shaving or toileting the plinth will raise the accessories to lessen the strain on the knees and back. Give your body a break by treating your bathroom to a Knee-Bo. For more information you can contact Hannah on **0121 554 9153**.



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We specialise in locating used vehicles to suit the specific needs of our customers. If you are looking for an accessible vehicle or have one to dispose of, contact Adam Price. We also supply and install all forms of access equipment.

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adamprice.avr@tiscali.co.uk

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• Recruitment (on page 45 to 50)

## Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser, based in your local Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre.

They can provide:

- help with finding and keeping a job
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice to employers on employing disabled people.

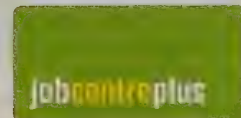


Find out what additional help you can get by visiting our website:

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

Jobseeker Direct: 0845 6060 234

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Including Jobcentres and social security offices

# IPSEA

(Independent Panel for Special Education Advice)

## School Disability Discrimination Advisors

£29,500 per annum full-time equivalent

Half-time posts covering one region, or full time posts covering two adjacent regions from the following: North; Yorkshire and East Midlands; West Midlands and Wales; North London and East; South London and South East; South and South-West.

In collaboration with the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), IPSEA (The Independent Panel for Special Education Advice) is seeking to appoint half-time or full time Advisors to support and represent parents whose children experience disability discrimination in school. The role will include advising on related special educational needs and exclusion issues and representing parents in Tribunals and other relevant meetings. Advisors will also assist IPSEA and the DRC to raise awareness of disability discrimination in schools in their region.

Advisors will work from home with support from our central office in Suffolk. Full training will be given but candidates will need to have experience and/or knowledge of disability discrimination and special educational needs law. Candidates will also have advocacy experience, preferably in representing at school governors' meetings, appeal hearings and/or Tribunals.

Contracts are initially for two years, with possible extension thereafter. Applications are invited, either on an employed or self employed basis (half-time candidates only).

**Closing date: 20th January 2006**

Further details and application forms from:  
[rinman.ipsea@intamail.com](mailto:rinman.ipsea@intamail.com) or Roger Inman, IPSEA, 6 Carlow Mews, Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 1EA

*IPSEA strives to be an equal opportunities employer*

## the food chain

Join The Food Chain!

The Food Chain provides nutritious meals every Sunday to people who are housebound with HIV related illnesses. The meals are cooked and delivered by teams of volunteers at six borrowed kitchens across London.

Volunteers are needed to organise the rota for each kitchen to ensure that we have enough volunteers to maintain our service. The role would suit very organized individuals who love talking to people and can work from home. The Food Chain will reimburse all related expenses.

For more information, please call 020 7272 7272 or log on to [www.foodchain.org.uk](http://www.foodchain.org.uk)

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disabilitynow's  
comprehensive holiday  
coverage continues in  
the February 2006 issue



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or Patrick  
**020 7619 7320**  
[patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk](mailto:patrick.durhammatthews@scope.org.uk)

Fax: 020 7619 7331

**Final booking  
deadline: 10th  
January 2006**

• Services



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Enable Enterprises' Select now sells disposable and reusable swimming pants for children, teens and adults who require additional protection under swimwear or wetsuits in a pool or while doing watersports.



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website: [www.neuro-physio.co.uk](http://www.neuro-physio.co.uk)



• **Recruitment (on page 45 to 50)**

**OUR PROGRAMMES  
REACH HUNDREDS OF  
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE  
AROUND THE WORLD**

**WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?**

**BBC Sign Language Interpreters**

Ref. 79892

London, £30,000, contract until March 31st 2006 initially

You'll offer full language support to both deaf and hearing team members of **BBC See Hear** – now in its 24th year of producing innovative programmes for deaf viewers. Using British Sign Language to interpret at meetings and on filming days, either in the studio or on location, you'll also be responsible for some in-vision interpreting and live voice-overs.

Skilled to at least Level 4 NVQ in British Sign Language, or equivalent, you'll have experience of interpreting and working with deaf people in a pressurised environment. Along with an in-depth knowledge of deaf issues, you'll need the flexibility to work unusual hours and in various locations as required.

**Researcher, See Hear**

Ref. 79965

London, three-month contract with possibility of extension

After 24 successful years of innovative programmes for deaf people, **BBC See Hear** is looking for new ideas to expand and transform our unique offering. Working alongside a team of producers and assistant producers, you'll generate insightful, exciting and refreshing ideas about new faces, new stories and the big issues facing our audiences.

Putting your excellent research skills to good use, you'll produce comprehensive reports and proposals based on the most up-to-date information, all the while demonstrating a strong understanding of the deaf community, its culture and identity.

Applications to be received by 6 January.

You can apply for this role and learn about how we do things at the BBC, by visiting [bbc.co.uk/jobs](http://bbc.co.uk/jobs) If you do not have Internet access, please call 0870 333 1330. Textphone 020 8008 4300. Ceefax page 696.

**DCS Disability Conciliation Service**



Mediation UK represents and supports mediation in the community and runs the independent national Disability Conciliation Service (DCS) on behalf of the Disability Rights Commission. DCS is a unique service dealing with disputes arising out of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), Parts III & IV. DCS provides people with an opportunity to resolve disputes through conciliation rather than through the courts. DCS seeks:

**PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME  
CONCILIATION CO-ORDINATORS**

**35 hours Full Time** On a scale from £26710 – 29966

**17.5 Hours part time** Pro rata the above

This challenging casework management role offers a great opportunity to develop your career and to make a real practical difference within a dynamic and purposeful team

**Closing date: Tuesday 17 January 2006**

Applicants need to show evidence of commitment to equality issues. All disabled people who meet the essential criteria will be guaranteed an interview.

For a job information pack (also available in large print, disk, audio, etc, please state requirements) contact, Recruitment, Disability Conciliation Service, 3rd Floor, St Lawrence House, Broad Street, Bristol BS1 2HF or email [disabilityconciliationservice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:disabilityconciliationservice@yahoo.co.uk), tel 0117 914 2380, Fax 0117 914 2381, minicom/textphone 0117 914 2379.

• **Recruitment fair**



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Jobs and Careers Fair**



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**The Assembly Rooms, Derby City Centre, Derby  
Friday 3rd February 10am to 4pm**

The No Limits Jobs and Careers Fair is brought to you by The No Limits Employers Network on Disability and Disability Direct



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...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £9 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

**Linage styles**

**EXAMPLE OF** standard linage advert. Cost: £9 per line. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF** semi-display linage advert. Cost: £9 per line plus £10. Tick box below.

**EXAMPLE OF** box linage advert. Cost: £9 per line plus £20. Tick box below.

- ☐ Standard linage advert  
☐ Semi-display linage advert  
☐ Box linage advert

• **Accommodation**

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  - Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
  - Looking for an approved estate agent?
- The Accessible Property Register  
web: [www.accessible-property.org.uk](http://www.accessible-property.org.uk)  
Tel: 0114 2307058



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**HOW TO REPLY**

To reply to a personal ad indicate the Box Number and mark the envelope Private and Confidential. If you do not it will be opened. Send it to DN, address on page 2.



Following a restructuring of the Environment Team, a number of key posts are now being advertised to make a difference, including ensuring the Olympic and Paralympic Games are developed in an environmentally sustainable manner; that greater and faster improvement is made on achieving air quality and recycling targets through making London a Low Emission Zone and creating a London Single Waste Authority; ensuring London's water needs are planned for and action taken to reduce our water consumption; tackling climate change through reducing our CO2 emissions and also ensuring that London is prepared for any impacts; and enhancing our open spaces – increasing access to natural places by Londoners whilst protecting London's wildlife.

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**KUSCHALL K4 AIRLITE** with bolt on quick release handles, Titanium seat rail, back rest and foot rest, active breaks with an anti tipper wheel on back, RGK Quick release axles, spinergy racing quick release wheels, finished in Mirror natural finish with purple front wheels. Still in great condition. £1000 ono. Tel Kim: 07887 942771 (Herts/Bucks).

- **Accommodation**

**BRIGHTON, END OF** Terrace adapted house. Thru floor lift, wide doorways, ceiling hoist and track. Mermaid Ranger hoist, bath, w.c. chair. Five ways area, close to buses, shops and good local schools. 2 large and 1 small bedrooms, large bathroom and downstairs w.c. £290,000 ono. 07901 812412. [jthrivas@hotmail.com](mailto:jthrivas@hotmail.com)

### • Household & Families

**HNE 127 PORTA** hoist, manual, can fit into a Volkswagen Caravelle or similar vehicle. £100 ono. Tel: 0121 707 2579 (Solihull).

**CLOSMAT AUTOMATIC WC**, Samoa model, hand and foot controls, regularly serviced. Portable and dismantled, buyer collects. In excellent condition, £400 ono. Tel: 020 8546 5269 (Kingston, Surrey).

**CHURCHILL RISE/RECLINE** chair, 4 months' old, £400 ono. Adjustamatic bed with massage function, 3 ft divan. Totally unused, £400 ono. Tel: 01252 328822 (Aldershot, Hants).

**WALK-IN BATH**, manufactured by Whirlpool, Stratford Spa model. 26" wide x 38" long and 38" deep. Only used for 1 year. All spare parts available from manufacturer based in Redditch, Warks. Offers in the region of £750. Buyer to collect from Lyme Regis. Tel: 01235 831032.

• **Wanted**

**EVEREST & JENNINGS** Elite Whisper Mk 1 1980-90 if not usable, will strip for spares. Urgently needed. Tel: 01329 832390 (Wickham, Hants).

**RURAL PURSUIT VEHICLE.** Motorized wheelchair carrier to enable wheelchair user to drive aboard and then travel over rough terrain (as made by W and H Eves Ltd or something similar). Tel: 01322 661178 (Swanley, Kent) or mobile: 07969 438761.

**BACK SEATS FOR** Nissan Almera 2003.  
Willing to pay reasonable amount.  
Tel: 01732 356059 (Tonbridge).

## Classified lineage advertisements

Please use this form if you are a private individual and want to place a classified advertisement (not Personal adverts). Write clearly in block capitals. Remember to allow a space between words. Use each space in the line even if you have to split words at the end.

**Choose an advert style from far right.** Send this coupon with your name, address, daytime telephone number and a cheque for the total made payable to *Disability Now* to: 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

DN reserves the right to edit advertisements if necessary. Completion of this form does not guarantee inclusion in a particular issue. **Sorry no refunds.** DN is a non-profit making newspaper.





Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

## **HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF CULTURE, THE ARTS AND SPORT IN WALES**

### **APPLICATIONS ARE INVITED FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WALES (ACW) AND THE SPORTS COUNCIL FOR WALES (SCW) FROM 1 APRIL 2006.**

The ACW and SCW are Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies, funded largely by grant-in-aid from the Welsh Assembly Government, and are also responsible for the distribution of funds from the National Lottery to art and sport in Wales.

The ACW and SCW are responsible for delivering the strategic objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government for the arts and sport and physical activity.

The Arts Council of Wales has a key role in developing the Assembly Government's new Culture Strategy, which will be overseen by the new Culture Board for Wales/Diwylliant Cymru, which is chaired by the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport.

The Sports Council for Wales is a main deliverer of the Assembly Government's strategy for sport and physical activity: 'Climbing Higher'. This aims to create a more physically active and sporting nation, as part of the national focus on health improvement: 'Health Challenge Wales'.

#### **The Arts Council of Wales**

The Arts Council of Wales' role is to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practise of the arts, to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public, to advise and co-operate with other public bodies, and to work through the medium of Welsh and English. Due to the Arts Council's charitable status, these posts are currently not remunerated.

Four Council Members will be appointed. The time commitment is around 1.5 days per month.

#### **The Sports Council for Wales**

The Sports Council for Wales' role is to increase participation in sport and physical activity, to raise standards of performance and excellence, to improve the provision of sporting facilities, and to provide technical information and advice about sport, recreation and active lifestyles.

Six Council Members will be appointed. The time commitment is around 1.5 days per month. The posts are remunerated at £250 per month.

#### **The generic competencies that applicants should possess include:**

- The ability to reach soundly-based decisions, showing strategic vision, tact and propriety, and taking full account of the legal, financial and institutional framework within which the ACW or SCW operates;
- Proven leadership skills;
- Experience of communicating effectively at all levels;
- Ability to act as an effective member of the ACW or SCW team and share responsibility for achieving high standards and results;
- The ability to contribute strategically to the work of the ACW or SCW, in delivering the overarching objectives of the Welsh Assembly Government, either at full Council meetings or on specialist advisory panels.

#### **The specific competencies that applicants should possess include:**

- ACW – The ability to contribute to improving participation in the arts by social groups and individuals who have traditionally had fewer opportunities and greater obstacles.
- SCW – The ability to contribute to the continued improvement of participation rates in sport and physical activity and to sustainable sporting success on the international stage.

The ability to speak Welsh is desirable.

Appointments to ACW and SCW are for an initial term of three years. It is the policy of the National Assembly for Wales to promote and integrate equality of opportunity into all aspects of its business, including appointments to public bodies. It welcomes and encourages applications from under represented groups, including women, minority ethnic communities and people with disabilities. The principles of fair and open competition will apply and appointments will be made on merit.

Application forms and information packs can be obtained from Public Appointments Unit, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ. Telephone: 029 2082 3416/3576 Fax: 029 2082 6869

Email: [PublicAppointments@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:PublicAppointments@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

The closing date for the receipt of completed applications is 6 January 2006 and interviews are likely to be held in March 2006

**A large print version of this advert can be obtained by request from 029 2082 3576**



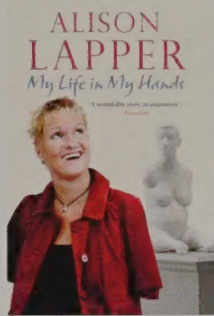
## ALISON LAPPER BIOGRAPHY

Thanks to publisher Simon and Schuster, *DN* is giving away ten copies of *My Life in my Hands* by Alison Lapper (with Guy Feldman), worth £12.99 each.

Alison was born with phocomelia, or shortened arms and legs, and was handed over to social services after she was born. *My Life in my Hands* tells the story of Alison's life, from her early days in care homes to artist, mother and the subject of the Trafalgar Square sculpture.

For your chance to win a copy of the book tick 'Book' in the entry form.

Simon and Schuster, tel: 020 7316 1900, [www.simonandschuster.co.uk](http://www.simonandschuster.co.uk)



## STAY WARM AND DRY

Stay warm during the chilly winter months with clothing from Able 2 Wear, who are giving away three pairs of leisure trousers, worth up to £33 per pair, and two classic ponchos, worth £24 each.

The trousers have a warm brushed lining and an elasticated waist. Various sizes are available in black, grey or navy.

The ponchos are made of fleece and pop on over the head, making them ideal winter wear for wheelchair users. They come in various sizes in ice blue, coral or black.

For your chance to win, tick 'Trousers' and/or 'Poncho' in the entry form.

For more information on Able 2 Wear and its range of products, visit its website on [www.able2wear.com](http://www.able2wear.com) or tel: 0141 774 8000 to request a copy of its free colour catalogue.



**ABLE 2 WEAR®**

## DN next month

All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 31 January

## TOP TALK

Our new column section kicks off with contributions from Phil Friend, Abigail Lock, Ivy Broadhead and seasoned favourite Tanni Grey Thompson

## VALENTINE VALUES

*DN*'s annual focus on relationships returns, with counsellor Simon Parritt answering all your questions

## HOME AND AWAY

Holiday recommendations and advice continue, including readers' good and bad experiences of France

## LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the Microserve unit in the November issue were J.Plummer from Nottingham, D.Reeve from Wolverhampton, T.Aubertin from Coventry, B.Freegard from Winchester, J.Swaffield from Bognor Regis, M.Williams from Croydon, M.Wawley from Kidderminster, L.Wharton from South Wales, Mr Petersaile from Scotland, D.Lawson from York, A.Wall from Gloucester, G.Pring from Crow Borough, A.Neville from London, M.Wilson from East Sussex, L.Seaton from Kent, B.Locke from Shropshire, B.Ward from Doncaster, J.Simmons from Surrey, J.Sanderson from Blackpool and H.Schofield from Norfolk.

The winners of the Hilton Blackpool Interactive Dining Show ticket and overnight stay at the hotel are D.Ince from Nottingham, G.Wright from Somerset, M.Hughes from Leicester and J.Bailey from Brighton.

## to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send for FREE to *Disability Now*, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: [fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk](mailto:fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk)

Book ☐ Blue Badge ☐ Trousers ☐ Poncho ☐



**terms & conditions** Closing date for entrants: 20.01.06 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to *DN* staff or associates • Winners may be announced in *DN* • In association with Simon and Schuster, Gowrings Mobility and Able 2 Wear. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included ☐

## BLUE BADGE PROTECTOR

Gowrings Mobility is offering Blue Badge protectors to ten *DN* readers.

With over 6,000 Blue Badges reported stolen from parked cars in 2004, many disabled motorists are now too scared to display their parking badges. The Gowrings Mobility Blue Badge Protector is a simple, visible deterrent. The badge is locked into a steel case and protected by thick clear plastic. The device is then locked with a flexible steel cable, which attaches to the steering wheel.

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The Gowrings Mobility Blue Badge Protector is available in two options. The Single Blue Badge Protector (£15.99) and the Double Blue Badge Protector, which can hold two badges, or one badge and a time of arrival parking disc (£19.99). For more information, tel (Lo-Call): 0845 608 8020, [www.gowringsmobility.co.uk](http://www.gowringsmobility.co.uk)



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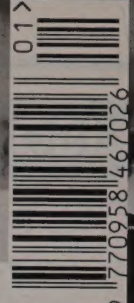
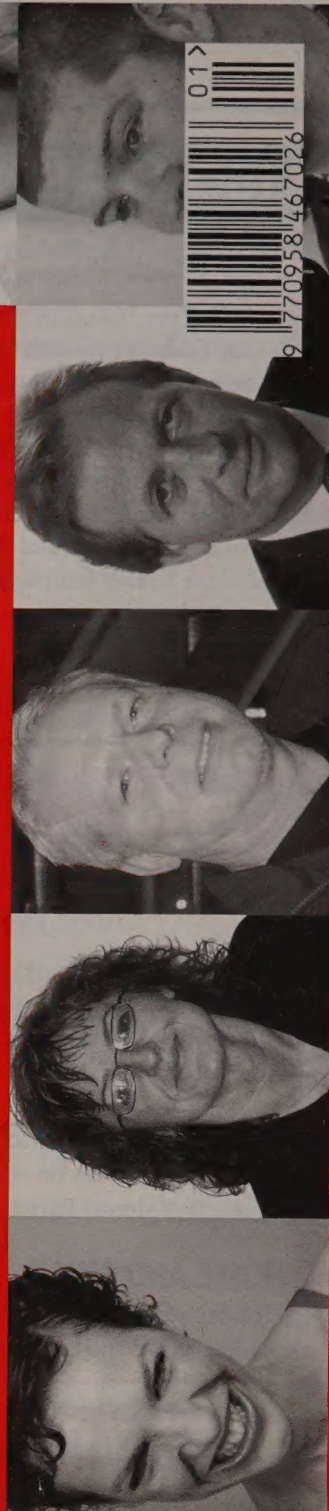
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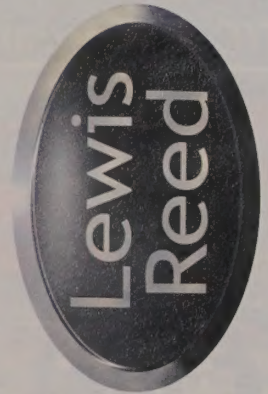
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